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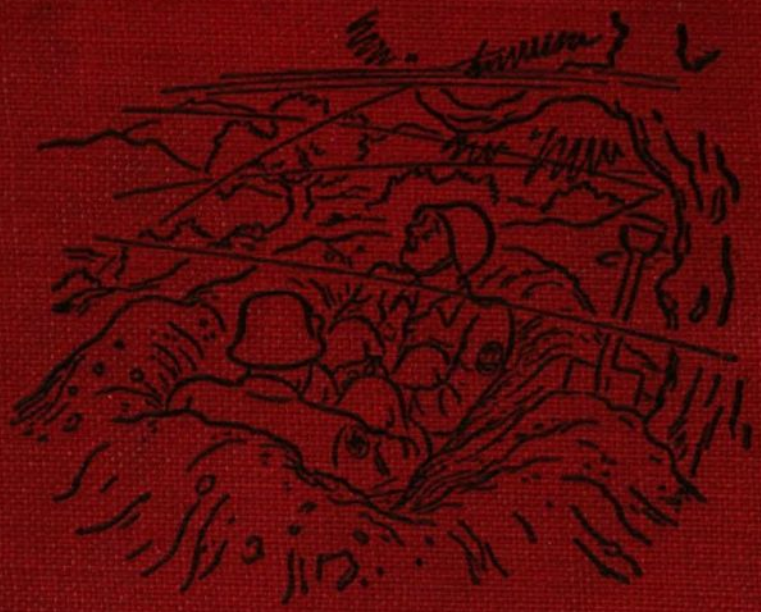

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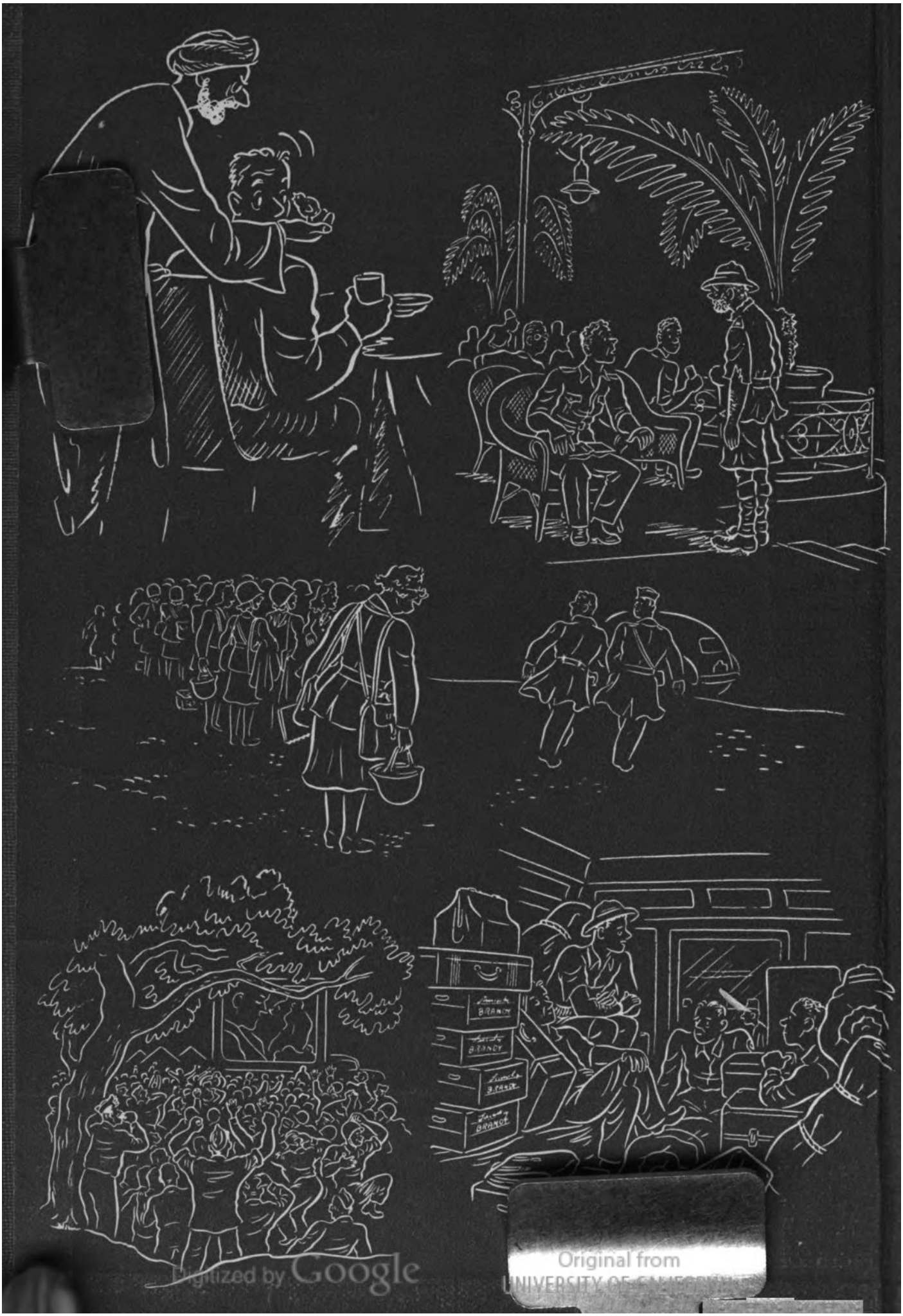

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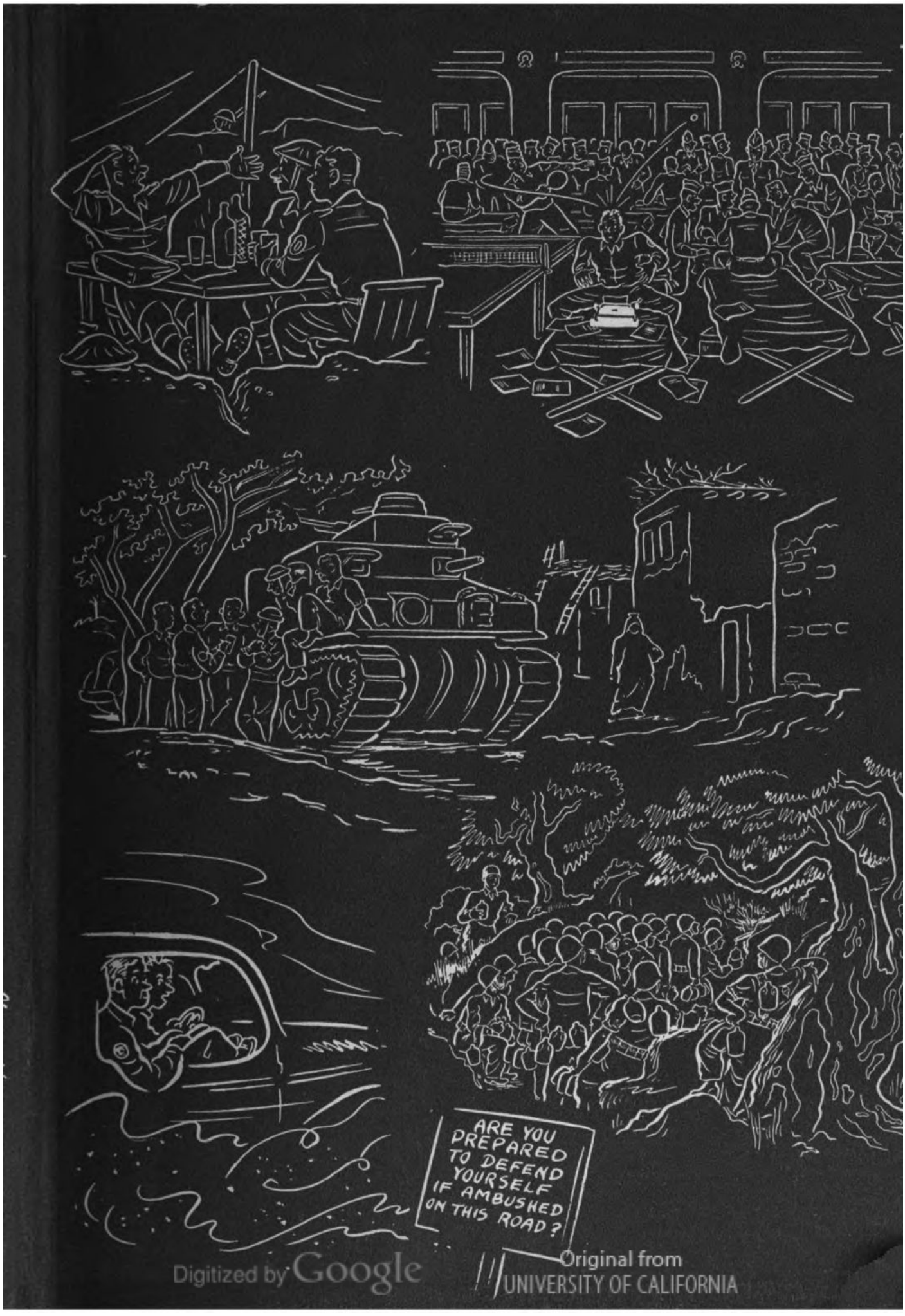

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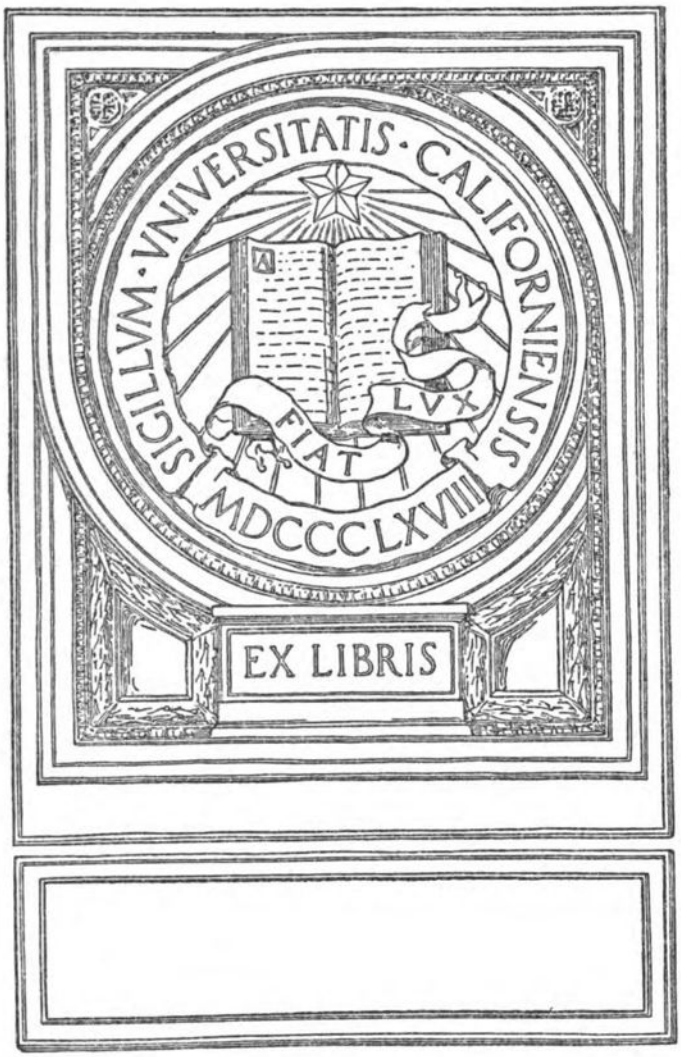

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ONE DAMN THING AFTER ANOTHER

THE ADVENTURES OF AN INNOCENT MAN TRAPPED BETWEEN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE AXIS

BY TOM TREANOR

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC., 1944
GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

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Introduction

I SUPPOSE it's usual in a preface to thank persons who gave literary aid and advice, read manuscript, and so forth. But I am under heavier obligation in this book to people like Merv Elias, of the New Zealand Public Relations, who got me to the front when I wasn't supposed to be at the front. I owe a real debt to Merv. He was kept in confinement for a time because of his activities in my behalf. He was threatened with dishonorable discharge from the New Zealand Army and was faced with being sent home in disgrace. Meanwhile I couldn't do anything for him, as I was in the process of being expelled from the Middle East.

Fortunately, all ended well. When Merv's court-martial came to a boil, it had to be called off. It was discovered Merv wasn't in the New Zealand Army after all. He had some kind of queer and unsuspected civilian status. He was merely attached to Public Relations as a newsreel cameraman. This confused the issue until the whole business was dropped. Besides, they decided they didn't want to send Merv home because there was no other newsreel cameraman in the New Zealand forces. That's the way things often go.

So it's people like Merv whom I must thank. In fact, this whole book is an account of twenty-one months of war correspondence which was made possible because so many people have an unconquerable instinct to help an underdog. It's likewise on account of a trip which was made nearly impossible because so many people have a snobbish instinct to deal only with topdogs. There are these two kinds of people in the world, as unlike as male and female.

I was underdog in the world of war correspondence because I was writing by mail instead of by cable and because my paper, the Los Angeles *Times*, does not seem to be well known outside its own region despite the fact that it is unquestionably one of the half-dozen most important newspapers in America.

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If the *Times* didn't want me to write cable stories, it was because it positively did not want cable-type stories. It was not because the *Times* lacks money. The *Times* could buy and sell twice in an afternoon that Chicago paper whose reporter in Algiers was on the correspondents' committee and classified me with the lowest priority of all correspondents in the Mediterranean theater because "your paper doesn't use the cables and therefore has no investment in this theater." I don't get it.

Despite these interferences I found life all right as mail correspondent for the *Times*. L. D. Hotchkiss, the managing editor, and Norman Chandler, the publisher, gave me more freedom than any correspondent has ever had. No other correspondent for any other newspaper, I am certain, has ever traveled twenty-one months overseas without receiving one single order from his home office. They let me go where I wanted and let me write as I pleased. Nobody from that Chicago paper probably ever went twenty-one days without a string of orders and requests and command performances from his home office.

However, I'm really writing this to thank those who helped without my having any reason even to hope they might help. I can't thank them all. I can't even remember the names of all who rather mysteriously stepped forward when I was having trouble, which seemed to be a good deal of the time. But there are some I can never forget, and they are:

A group captain of the RAF, who sent me on a wonderful Mediterranean cruise, Malta, Gibraltar, and then back to Suez on a bombing raid, apparently for no reason except I had told him Public Relations wouldn't accredit me . . .

Another RAF officer who, when I was threatened with expulsion for making the above trip, intervened unexpectedly and ordered that I be temporarily grounded instead and that all my stories be released.

An RAF Public Relations officer, who persisted in giving me aid and succor for more than a year.

An officer of the American Air Forces, who took me to the front himself when the regular channels were denied me.

The entire South African Public Relations staff in the Middle East which got me to the front unaccredited and arranged that my stories all go through South African censors.

Another USAAF officer who, out of pure good will, and at considerable trouble to himself, arranged for me to go on the first Rome raid, which was a severely limited affair for a half-dozen hand-

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picked syndicated correspondents (not including any correspondent of that Chicago paper).

Finally there is the USAAF Public Relations officer who bolstered me and backed me when everything seemed going wrong. I have a great debt to him, and so have many other people I know. He is the most nearly perfect public relations man I have met, military or civilian.

Lest it seem that this trip was rather a dolorous affair of nothing but troubles, let me assure you it was just the contrary. Alice never saw more wonderful things in Wonderland than I've seen since June 13, 1942. I've rung the changes from Chungking to Anzio and written a thousand words a day about it. Because it's all too new and confusing, I can't explain any of the riddle. I can only give you the world all disconnected just as I saw it in traveling, a sequence of separate worlds, nearly as crazy, independent, and self-centered as they were in Columbus' time. I have no theme, only a pocketful of pictures.

Today I suppose I can be considered a genuine war correspondent. But it was the most fun when I was just an innocent in Cairo and the Western Desert, unaccredited to anybody, broke, grounded, writing my news by mail, threatened with expulsion and finally expelled, but still convinced I was destiny's favorite correspondent. They all laughed when I came to Cairo, but the last laugh's going to be mine. I've gotten to write a book, haven't I?

Although the Lord knows no correspondent ever did get off to a sorrier beginning. And, if the start was dismal, the climax was abysmal. After five months of bad to worse, the Army in exasperation threw me completely out of the Middle East. But that doesn't come until Chapter IX. So we'll close the introduction and get on with the book, which might have been titled *You, Too, Can Become a War Correspondent*. If I could, you could. I used to be society editor for the Los Angeles *Times*. What did you used to be?

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To
MY WIFE
who had to stay home with
the children

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CHAPTER I

Trip to Cairo

JUNE 1942. I seemed to be in a plane over the Caribbean. I seemed to be moving south to the drumbeat of engines.

It still couldn't be true. It still must have been the delirium of inoculations for cholera, tetanus, yellow fever, typhoid, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and smallpox. It must especially have been the yellow fever inoculation.

Because if it weren't, I was bound for Cairo to cover the war with Rommel. And that would be too good for an ex-society editor.

The passport, in any case, wasn't a dream. I could remember getting it before the inoculations were jabbed in my arm, all the same afternoon. It read:

"This is not valid for travel in any country except the continent of Africa, including Egypt; Trans-Jordan, Arabia, Iraq, Aden, and India, for newspaper work. The British West Indies and Brazil en route."

And the British had added for good measure: "Valid also for Ceylon and Burma."

"There still might be a Burma," the British Consul had said hopefully.

My only companion in this plane was a chunk of machinery. I knew this piece of machinery well. I had seen it by the thousand the previous month on a nightmare visit to war plants, during which we did nothing but drink cocktails and wander through new wildernesses of mass production. At the end of the tour I was happy in the thought that I would never be at close quarters again with this particular piece of machinery.

But there we were together again. We didn't even speak, but it sat and stared at me like an octopus without ever blinking. It never took its eyes off me. Every once in a while when I wasn't looking it reached out and wiped some grease on my trousers.

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My luck in companions on transoceanic trips was never good. When I'd gone to Europe on the clipper a couple of years earlier, it was a couple of missionaries.

This time it was the piece of machinery that wiped grease on my trousers. Give me the missionaries.

There was no place to sit on this plane, as the benches had been folded down to make room for the piece of machinery. That's an exaggeration. There were places to sit but they were all on the floor.

It's hard to give a picturesque description of a trip in a cargo plane, when the benches are folded down. Sitting on the floor, you can't see anything out the window. Standing up, you are above the window and have to crouch at a back-breaking angle and still can't see anything on account of the wing. The piece of machinery had the only good window, and every time I peeked through it I got some grease wiped on my pants.

But it was a beautiful trip. The weather was so smooth that the ship ground through the air without a jar except once in a while when it plowed through a castle of clouds and was thrown around a bit.

We stopped overnight at an island paradise. The night was soft, the Southern Cross was out and the Milky Way looked like a luminous cloud of stardust. Fireflies blinked and weird frogs whistled. The Caribbean cast its spell.

"Beautiful, marvelous, wonderful," I said to a young lieutenant.

"What?" he said.

"This island, this paradise," I said.

He drew back as if to strike me.

"I would like to catch the guy who first called this an island paradise," he said. "We would all like to catch him."

I had two more inoculations and the next morning felt groggier than ever. We flew east and south and the huge piece of machinery became a nerve-racking thing to have along.

Victor Hugo once wrote a story about a cannon which broke loose in a ship during a heavy sea and went smashing back and forth, crushing men and splintering wood.

We went through thunderstorms with this piece of machinery, which strained at her ropes and took little quick dance steps with a vicious expression on her ugly face.

We crossed over I don't know how many million square miles of jungle in one day, endless steaming stuff, forming a thick, succulent,

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ruffled pattern, so dense you could never see the ground except in the occasional savannahs. It was a wonderful sight but so much of it that you felt empty in the stomach and tired from looking.

During that day we crossed the Equator and the Amazon. When a man is aboard who has never crossed the Equator the pilot usually takes a dive and commemorates the occasion by scaring the victim.

With our hideous piece of machinery aboard, the pilot didn't dare.

The Amazon was bigger than anyone ever described. It can't be called a river. It's a mighty flowing acreage, a long lake on the move.

Without the Amazon the Atlantic Ocean would shrink to about five hundred miles on each side and there would be a lot of new territory in the world to fight over. The whole Amazon business is oversize for our world. The Amazon belongs on Jupiter.

Or perhaps it was the second typhoid shot working on me. Perhaps I was delirious when I peered at the Amazon. It must have been a dream. Because rivers just aren't that big.

We came to Belém, Brazil, and stayed in the hotel of tired men. There are few things that tire men quite so much as long grinding airplane flights. At dinner the tired men filled the dining room. There wasn't a vacant chair. But there was no clatter, either. The only conspicuous sound was the occasional music from a three-piece orchestra on the dining-room balcony.

The orchestra played with spirit. The fat violinist gyrated wildly, bending and twisting as he led his two men in fine performances of "Marcheta," "Why Don't We Do This More Often?" and "Who?"

He never got a hand. He got a few glances from weary eyes and then he would subside into disappointed silence, smoking a moody cigarette until the inspiration struck him again.

The tired men, mostly young with old men's faces, occasionally waved across the room at some acquaintance. Infrequently one would walk across to another table and shake hands briefly and pass a few words.

They would ask about Cairo or cargoes. Or speak a couple of words about day before yesterday's hop across the Atlantic.

For these were the ferry pilots feeding supplies to Africa and India and Russia.

They had that lean, drawn, but hard and sound look of men in good health who are overdoing in physical and nervous strain.

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And then we came to Natal, the jumping-off place, and spent ten days waiting to jump. But interesting days, because this was where the Western Hemisphere was kissing the first boys good-by.

In a clipper we blew across the Atlantic on a tail wind so fast that there was hardly time to finish the all-night poker game. We'd run out of night, anyhow, picking up four hours of daylight on the way across. According to our watches, it was still dead of night when the gloomy dawn first poked through the windows.

The soldiers were just folding up their cards and chips and switching off the lights. In a few minutes there were men curled up on seats, leaning on tables with their heads buried in their arms, stretched on blankets on the floor, and sprawled awkwardly on luggage.

We went out like a light at ten thousand feet and didn't waken until the steward came through, shaking us by the shoulder and pointing out the window where the surf was rolling up the beaches of Africa.

We came down just in time for a breakfast of bacon and French toast with syrup.

The whole situation looked like an article out of the *National Geographic*, except for the French toast.

Those natives must have been subscribers. They were naked to the waist, barefoot, carried stuff on their heads, and had very white teeth.

"Hello, boy," they'd say. "Hello, boy."

After breakfast we had to walk two and a half miles through a swamp to get to the airfield and catch the landplane out.

We were sweating along, heads down, lugging our bags, when we heard a voice from above shout:

"Hello, boys. Hello, boys."

At the top of a fronded palm tree, cutting himself a roof for his house, stood a mighty black, grinning a white smile.

"Hello, boys." They love to say it.

We were really the old motion-picture stuff as we trudged through the swamp in our mosquito boots, a long line of men with knapsacks and duffel bags and sun helmets.

And then I was hung up for eight days at a sorry sand-lot airport while Egypt came apart at the seams and Rommel made that dramatic advance which finally took him within sixty miles of the Nile.

Our plane was broken down and there was nothing to do but sit and wait while it rained and it steamed and it stank and we got word Rommel was rolling toward Mersa Matruh.

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The only bright spot in all eight days was directing eighteen natives in a lizard chase. Jack Wantz, our pilot, Lionel Carr, our navigator, Sergeant James Bradsher, our radio operator, and I took it as spectator sport. We didn't care whether the lizard were caught or not. But William Covan, our copilot, wanted that lizard badly.

He first spotted it sunning itself on the walk. Before his astonished eyes the lizard's head turned from bright red to deep blue.

"I'm going to bring that lizard home," said Mr. Covan, creeping up and making a lunge.

The lizard oozed ten feet away and changed its head from deep blue back to bright red.

"I'm sure going to bring that lizard home," said Mr. Covan after witnessing this second miracle.

He called a native to help him, and eighteen natives responded. They were all over the field, grabbing and lunging and diving at the lizard. Finally the ugly little beast, whose head was now back to blue, skittered up a tall palm tree with three Africans shinnying up behind him.

They caught the lizard at the very top and brought him down.

Mr. Covan expected to pay the poor benighted natives a few pennies and a couple of cigarettes. He thought they would waltz away singing in simple joy at having a few coppers to spend.

"Here, my good fellows," he said, handing some coppers.

"No, mastah," said the head man, "you talk crazy."

"Two shillings, then," said Mr. Covan.

"Oh, mastah, no, no, big man like you, mastah, big man like you no talk crazy, mastah, five pounds!"

"Five pounds!" screamed Mr. Covan.

"Mastah, you very lucky. You very lucky, mastah. Four pounds, last price, four pounds."

"I don't want that lizard anyhow," said Mr. Covan.

"All right, mastah, we let lizard go."

"Hold that lizard," screamed Mr. Covan. "Half a pound."

While all this was going on the lizard's head was turning from red to blue and blue to red and Mr. Covan's eyes were glistening with avaricious desire.

"Two pounds, mastah, for you. Only for you. You my customer. Two pounds, last price, mastah."

"One pound is all I'll pay," said Mr. Covan.

"All right, mastah, only for you."

He handed the lizard to the proud Mr. Covan. Its head turned

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from red to blue and then it turned to a dirty brown, which it remained permanently, although Mr. Covan confidently stroked his lizard gently on the top of the head and said:

"Watch him turn to blue."

The lizard turned a slightly dirtier brown.

"I'll give him a good wash tonight," said Copilot Covan. "He's got some mud on him.'

"There's no mud on his head," said Sergeant Bradsher. "He's just a dirty old brown color."

"He's hungry," said Mr. Covan. "That's the only trouble with this old lizard. He's good and hungry."

The natives told Mr. Covan that the lizard ate ants.

"How much for two dozen ants?" asked Mr. Covan.

"Four shillings," said the natives.

"I will catch the ants myself," said Copilot Covan.

"You talk crazy, mastah. Mastah can't catch ants. We catch ants. Two shillings, mastah."

"One shilling, two dozen ants," said Copilot Covan.

"All right, mastah."

A native tied the lizard to a post with a string to its tail and got a lump of sugar out of the dining room. He put the sugar near the lizard. Along came two dozen ants and the lizard ate them.

"One shilling, please, mastah."

Copilot Covan said vulgar things and produced a shilling.

When we said good night to the lizard he was still eating ants, lured by the lump of sugar.

"In the morning," predicted Covan, "he will be so happy and so full that he will be bright blue."

But sometime during the night the lizard had eaten so many ants he couldn't eat any more. Then the ants ate him.

We finally got out of that jungle airport. On the eighth day our ailing engine perked and roared. We taxied onto the wet runway, Wantz poured it on, and we lifted into the air. We came up through the clouds into sunshine and Navigator Carr drew us a bead on a desert spot hundreds of miles away. Then we sank into the boredom of airplane travel. Daylong jumps are dull beyond description.

There's a thrill in the morning at take-off when the ship comes beating down the runway, trembling with her own strength. There's that uncertain moment when the wheels leave the ground and she seems to fight to hold herself up. And then the pilot eases off the throttle and she bends around and below lies the airport, cocked

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at a crazy angle, with another plane, surprisingly tiny, at the end of the runway, kicking up a puff of dust.

After that there's nothing but listlessness from altitude, fatigue from the monotonous vibrating grind of the engines, and weariness from looking at landscapes that are too big. The only breaks in a day's run are sandwiches and an occasional thunderstorm which pitches the plane about a bit and leaves you feeling a little nauseated and more bored and tired than ever.

We got to Khartoum. I was within a half day's hop of Cairo. They off-loaded me.

"We are evacuating Americans from Cairo," said the lieutenant. "We're not sending anyone in."

Rommel was just arriving at El Alamein. The flap was on.

"But," I said, "I've traveled twelve thousand miles and——"

"I'm sorry, but there's a war on, you know."

That expression I always considered was adequate grounds for assault and battery.

A major was moved by my tears. I cried nicely, being quite airsick as well as disappointed. I had a cold, too, which made my eyes swollen. But the major had to say no. Our Minister in Cairo had ordered that no more Americans be admitted.

"Where's the general?" I demanded.

It was a stab in the dark that the general might happen to be in Khartoum. He might have been anywhere between the west coast of Africa and the east coast of India, which was his territory.

I had hardly a hope. But it was one of those things.

"The general," said the major, "will arrive in about fifteen minutes from Gura."

I'd never heard of Gura, but someone said it was in Eritrea. It made no difference. When the general's plane landed I was there to weep on his shoulder.

"The Ambassador," explained the major, "has ordered that no more Americans be sent in, but I thought perhaps . . ."

I wept as hard as I could. The general said: "I know how hard you've been trying to get to Cairo. I always like to see a man finish what he starts. Put him aboard, Major."

Pretty good for a general you've only met twice.

In a matter of hours we came down at Heliopolis Airport in Cairo. A British soldier jerked open the door of the plane and shouted:

"Is she for delivery to us, sir?"

"Yes, she is."

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That was passport enough. I never had to show my passport. I went straight to Shepheard's Hotel and then I hurried to the Public Relations and made them acquainted with the stupefying fact that the Only Correspondent Representing a Newspaper West of the Mississippi Ever to Visit the Middle East was ready for action.

I planned to hurry right to the front. But the Public Relations was unstupefied. The Only Correspondent West of the Mississippi was given to understand that his arrival was a surprise but not a pleasure, that there were too many correspondents already; in short, that he was not welcome, would not be accredited, and could not cover the war.

The Only Correspondent had different ideas, however.

CHAPTER II

First Trip to the Front

I WASHED my hands for lunch. Big thing in the Western Desert where water was short.

"Thank you, Travers," I said to the batman who had provided the pan of water. "Thank you very much."

"It's a pleasure, sir. Anything else, sir?"

"No, thank you, Travers," and I made a motion to heave the dirty water out of the pan.

"Bloody hell," screamed Travers, stopping me in mid-motion.

"For God's sake, Travers."

"Sorry, sir," said Travers, back to his batman's voice. "I plan to use that water for washing the dishes."

"Certainly, Travers," and I handed him the water in which I had just washed my hands.

"Thank you, sir. Thank you very much, sir."

That was the real beginning of my education in war. Nobody goes into war more innocently than the American, reared in reverence of the great twin beliefs: that Cleanliness Is Next to Godliness, and that Human Life Is Valuable.

So I had Travers to thank for my first lesson in war. Having absorbed his lesson, I looked about me. We were standing in the middle of a glaring plain, a barren wilderness on which only two

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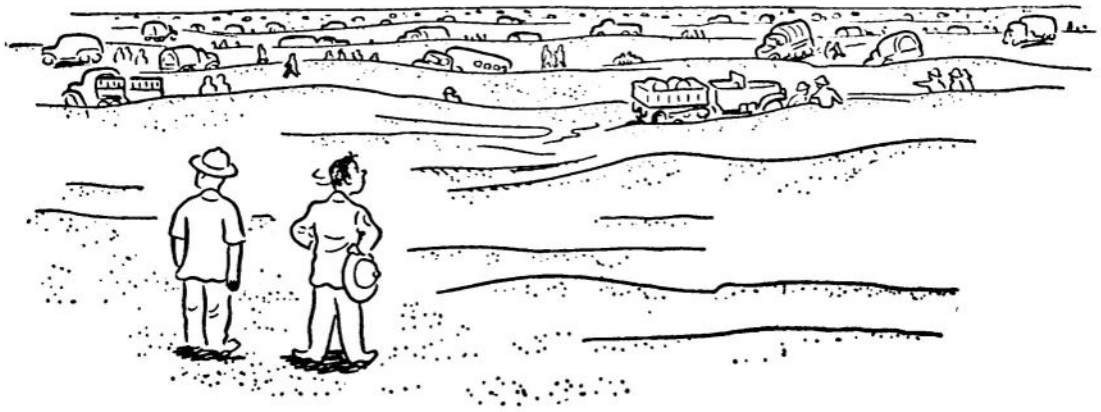
things survived—men and trucks, so widely dispersed that no one bomb could destroy more than a single truck or a half-dozen men. Because there was no focal point the landscape looked wrong. Nature seemed crying for a cluster of something in the midst of this maddening dispersal. As I looked around I wearied and began not to like the desert and to feel discouraged about war.



I was worried, too. I was illegally at the front, having been refused legal entrance by a Public Relations colonel.

"Colonel," I had said to him a few days earlier on arriving in Cairo, "Colonel, I am the Only Correspondent West of the Mississippi Ever to Visit the Middle East. I want to get to the front at the earliest."

"Treanor," said the colonel (what a little man he is!), "Treanor, you can't go to the front. You can't be accredited. We already have more correspondents than we can take care of."

"Colonel," I said, "Colonel, you haven't one single man from west of the Mississippi."

"Treanor," declared the colonel confidently, "we have three correspondents from Chicago."

Having made this statement about Chicago, the colonel became unapproachable. Had I known then what I know now about the British, I might possibly have gotten on better with him. When he became unapproachable he no doubt merely meant me to understand that he was helpless to accredit me. To another Britisher who understood the convention, it might have been like a lead in bridge. But I misunderstood. I thought the colonel was—what shall we say?—a cad.

"I will go to the front anyway," I declared, but so quietly that the colonel couldn't hear me.

So there I was with Travers in the midst of a glaring plain with

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a couple of phony correspondent's insignia on my shoulder and a pocketbook crammed with irrelevant identification material. A friend, Paul West, and I had driven forward in his black civilian Chevrolet. Like me, Paul was not accredited to go forward. Unlike me, he was never caught.

We had gotten to the front very simply by taking the road out of Alexandria. There was nothing subversive about our route or our methods. We simply drove out of town, jogging along parallel to an interurban streetcar, which stopped at the end of the line. We continued, wondering if we were on the right road, until we came to a sign, WESTERN DESERT. A military policeman waved us cheerily on. Around the next turn a sign blurted:

ARE YOU PREPARED TO DEFEND YOURSELF IF AMBUSHED ON THIS ROAD?

Certainly not.

No doubt it was the most beautiful day on the most beautiful road to war in the history of all warfare. On the right sloshed the Mediterranean, brilliant, luminous, and a post-card blue-green, leisurely flip-flopping up a dazzling beach. On the left the desert tipped imperceptibly to a vast sky, buff against dusty blue.

And Rommel was only sixty miles away.

Thirty miles from Rommel we came to a Naafi House (Navy-Army-Air Forces Institute), an octagonal drive-in where travelers

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to war could get a snack. There we encountered a captain in a trucking unit whom we'd met the night before in Alexandria. We made a bargain with him. Our car, shiny black with chrome trim, was not correct for going all the way to the front. Paul talked to the trucking captain.

"How would you like to take our car for a few days," he asked, "and let us take one of your trucks?"

The young captain agreed with enthusiasm. In a car like ours, he said, he could go to Alexandria and take out his Greek girl efficiently. In his own front- and rear-wheel-drive trucks he was at the disadvantage of being constantly scanned by the Military Police for just such harmless girl activities.

He was so well pleased he offered us not only a truck but a driver.

"You might get lost," he said. "I almost got lost the other night. I had an assignment which had me in a sweat. They gave me a load of sticky bombs and said I must deliver them to a tank battle. They said the whole battle depended on my getting there in time. I had to drive thirty miles in the dark by compass and make sure I wasn't getting lost and delivering the bombs to Jerry by mistake."

"Did you make it?"

"Yes, I delivered them."

"Did you win the battle?"

"Oh no. Somebody else didn't get there with something else."

Which is as good a description as I've ever heard of the way battles go. You'll never hear a better description of a battle, I think, winning or losing.

So we had followed him inland to pick up the truck and driver, and that was where I met Travers and learned about war.

After luncheon Paul and I took off in our new truck, a Dodge, with a driver-batman named Walters, who had a cheerful shining red countenance, comically edged with white optimistic eyebrows. All his features seemed perpetually lifted in optimism, raised in pleased surprise. Walters was all happy-go-bloody-lucky, it seemed, and in an hour we were lost and reduced to asking information of a Lines of Communications officer who wanted to know if correspondents weren't supposed to be accompanied at all times by a conducting officer.

"Yes," we admitted nervously, "but he can't be with us every minute, can he? Sometimes we've got to be off alone before rejoining him."

Then he wanted to know what unit we were trying to reach

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and we didn't know the names of any units, but Paul finally thought of some South African outfit he'd read about in the paper. What Paul had forgotten was that he had read they had been captured at Tobruk.

"Look here," said the Lines of Communications officer suspiciously, "let me see your passes."

This was a bad moment, but I had a pass to end all passes, even though technically it meant nothing in the Western Desert. It was my War Department card with an embossed photo and the prints of every finger on my right hand.

"All right," said the Lines of Communications officer, "but stop barging around like this. You'd better get back to the coast road."

We took a bearing on the sun and miraculously reached the coast road with some of our confidence in Walters' navigating ability restored. When we got into a town called El Hamman, however, the barometer of our confidence in Walters fell again. Although El Hamman consisted of only forty mud shacks and a railroad station, Walters couldn't seem to get us out of town. We'd go out one end by one road and come back in the other end by another road, always passing the same railroad station where an English tank crew was standing. The third time past we decided to interview the tankers while Walters pulled himself together.

Someday I am going to write a treatise refuting our fond belief

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that the American language is more picturesque than the English because of our fanciful slang. The English can come straighter at a point, I contend, with fewer wasted words than we can. The lower-class English, that is, the English with an assortment of accents that would put a Brooklyn boy to shame. They have a fashion of speaking that's as racy as a comic strip.

But there's a main difficulty in reporting the English language as the English speak it. It's that word, that one word, which the English squander, larding it into every paragraph at least two times and often eight. Because it's a sex verb conjugated with vigor in all its tenses, participles, gerunds, and gerundives, it won't stand reproduction in cold type. We'll have to pass it, or, at most, throw in an occasional "bloody" as substitute, although "bloody's" a little passé.

These tankers had been in an American tank and they had a message about her which they wanted delivered to America.

"You can tell your people," said a gunner, "that she's lahve-ly. She's lahve-ly. She's got a smashing gun, smashing."

"She's a stinker. She's a bloomer," said the driver in ready corroboration.

"You mean by 'a stinker' and 'a bloomer' that she's good?" I had to ask.

"Ahhh yes. She's a real stinker, she is. We were fighting the Eye-tyes a few days ago. They came over a hill and we let them have it. We knocked the Eye-tye tanks out like bloody ducks, actually."

"It's a smashing gun," said the gunner.

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"The Eye-tyes bailed out," said the driver. "They come bloody poppin' out."

"I takes my tommy gun," said another member of the crew. "I lets them have it in the bloody guts as they come out. The bloody Eye-tyes."

"We blew their bloody guts out," said the driver. "We'll do it every time with the bloody Eye-tyes."

They were a shaggy crew, with dust in their hair, dust in their ears, dust in their eyebrows, and dust in their stubbly beards.

They looked rugged and hard, with no excess flesh, yet not haggard as you might expect after six months in the desert. They had the most amazing vitality and good humor. We last saw them climbing into a lorry, waving and calling, grinning in their dusty beards. I scarcely remember ever having met a sourpuss in the desert.

We reached the front late in the afternoon, uncertain how to proceed, and had a nervous conference. Walters, despite his optimism and faith in humanity, must have suspected that there was something a little wrong with us because of these continual nervous conferences. Many things had to be discussed, and we couldn't ask Walters to stop the truck while we dismounted and took counsel out of earshot. But he never betrayed a glimmering of understanding and remained respectfully cheerful to the end. A good type, Walters.

Months later, long after I had been expelled, had gone to India and China and returned to Cairo, I was hailed by a cheerful, respectful voice and saw Walters, his face shining as red as ever and his eyebrows even whiter.

"I hear you had a trouble, sir," he said respectfully. "We was all sorry to hear it. Is everything quite all right now, sir?"

Everything wasn't quite all right. I was still having difficulties with the Public Relations in the Middle East, but I told Walters everything was fine and he seemed greatly pleased.

"That was a strange trip we had together, sir, wasn't it?" he said. "I always wondered if something would come of it."

Well, we had one of our nervous conferences when we reached the front. We conferred whether it would be wise to try to camp off by ourselves, hoping to escape notice, or whether we should grasp the nettle and present ourselves to Brigadier Palmer, commanding the South Africans, as if we were a pair of legal correspondents. We decided to present ourselves to the brigadier, but this wasn't so easy.

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Paul made the attempt, approaching the entrance to the dugout. The sentry wouldn't let him in, and presently I saw Paul talking to an officer. Then I saw Paul producing a lot of cards and credentials of various types and in my apprehensive state it seemed Paul was talking very rapidly. The officer disappeared and then two officers came out and Paul was showing his cards and credentials again and was certainly talking rapidly.

Finally the three of them walked over to the truck and I noticed Paul was sweating but he spoke very calmly and said the brigadier would see us. I reached for my credentials, but one of the officers courteously held up his hands. Paul had done a good job.

The dugout entrance led us down to a miniature underground Maginot Line with corridors winding in confusing directions and leading into dozens of little cells where officers sat, working on maps.

We had tea with the brigadier, who had lost one arm, I believe. He was a medium-sized, middle-aged, experienced-looking man with a frank soldier's face, very ready to laugh. He was cordial and invited us to dinner.

"Oh no," said Paul. "Walters is getting our dinner. We have our batman with us."

"You'd be better having dinner here," said the brigadier. "It would be more comfortable. Why not have dinner with us?"

"We wouldn't want to disappoint Walters," said Paul. "He's already cooking."

"As you like," said the brigadier, "but you're welcome."

We rather liked the idea, though, of having dinner prepared by our own batman, and, moreover, we didn't want to be too much in people's eye.

A leftenant took us to our quarters, which consisted of a hole two feet deep, roofed with a low tent and bulwarked with sandbags à la World War I style. As we approached the quarters the leftenant repeated the invitation to dinner.

"Really, no," we said. "Our batman is getting dinner."

It was nearly dark, and we went into the tent full of anticipation that our batman would be preparing a delicious meal. The tent was black.

"Walters," said Paul. "Are you ready with mess?"

Good old Walters rolled over on his bedroll in a dark corner of the tent and said cheerfully:

"How's that, sir?"

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"Oh, we thought perhaps you were getting ready with our mess. You cook, don't you, Walters?"

"Me, sir? Oh no, sir."

We prepared mess for Walters, heating three cans of spaghetti over a primus stove in the dark. It made a nice sizzling from time to time, which we learned later was flies getting fried on the outside.

We ate in the moonlight, hooking the spaghetti out of the can, with the Milky Way arching across the sky like a cloud, and a blue star winking down at us from the very top of the dome.

At our backs the Mediterranean whispered up the beach. We could see the shadows of men walking and hear the faint sound of their voices. We hadn't heard a gun yet or a bomb. But who cared on a night like this? All this and Walters too. It was too perfect.

We went the last lap forward in the morning.

"For the next two miles," said our guide, "we are apt to draw shellfire."

It's the truth my blood pressure went up. I felt as though I were bursting. I'd been brought up in the school that believes it's dangerous if you're out hunting with a man who doesn't manipulate his gun correctly while creeping through a barbed-wire fence. And here I was going to be deliberately shot at! With shells!

I was standing on the running board, and Walters seemed afraid he'd jounce me off.

"Shall I slow up a bit, sir?" he called from the cab.

"Faster, Walters, faster," I shouted.

But nobody fired at us. As soon as we had reached the shelter of a hill I felt robbed. We went into a dugout and found a major who took us outside again and explained the situation, pointing this way and that. In the midst of his explanation an unexpected series of concussive explosions nearly burst my eardrums. The major didn't bat an eye, and I tried not to but I must have looked distracted, because he interrupted his finger-pointing and explained and said:

"Those are ours."

Then Jerry started slamming back. We must have been about the middle of the arc, because we could hear the whonging of the guns on both sides and then the whistle of the shells going overhead, sometimes going both ways. In a few seconds we would hear a faint boom as the shells threw up a fat puff of dust which hung in the windless air for minutes.

The major couldn't show us much carnage in the immediate

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vicinity. The only casualty was a truck which seemed to be kneeling on the desert with its front wheels blown off.

"There's one that got it," said the major. "Now come back to the dugout and we'll have a cup of tea before you go up to the other part of our front."

After the tea we cut inland and we did get shelled.

"We won't be shelled," our guide said, "because Jerry won't waste his ammo on a single truck. If we were two trucks close together he might have a go at us."

It beat me why Jerry might have shelled a single truck on the other road and wouldn't shell a single truck on this road. But our guide said it so confidently that I was inclined to believe him. I felt quite comfortable, hanging on the running board. Then I noticed a spout of dust about seventy-five yards off the road and a little behind us. Then there was another spout just opposite us but about seventy-five yards short. I don't remember hearing any noise, but I thought those spouts were funny, although they seemed quite harmless.

"Look," I said to our guide.

He looked in time to see another spout of dust ahead of us.

"Jerry," he said, and resumed his conversation inside the truck.

I tried to feel excited but couldn't. It all seemed quite in order. I could absolutely tell we wouldn't get hit on that great desert. It would have been as hard to hit us as to shoot a pea through a pea-shooter into the neck of a bottle on the far-side of a room.

We next went into a colonel's dugout. The colonel was an Irish sportsman who somehow had gotten himself attached to the South Africans. He had a beaming red face and a perpetual jovial smile. He seemed like a fixture in the dugout. I couldn't imagine him ever moving from behind the table where he sat radiating good humor. When we entered he was talking to a captain with a bandaged knee.

"I'm about to go up to Alex to have this looked after, sir," said the captain. He was a boy of twenty. "Anything you want done up there?"

"Bring me back the most beautiful—oh hell, what's the use?" said the colonel. "No, go ahead, Johnson. Have a good time."

When the boy had gone he explained that Johnson had been out the night before on a raid for prisoners and had been blown up in a tank in a mine field. The Jerries had then blasted the tank and set it afire. Johnson managed to squeeze out. The others were all lost.

"I'll have my own trip to Alex one of these days," said the

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colonel, beaming. "I won't care what shape she is. I have even forgotten what shape a woman is, it's been so long. Four months. Last time I took the major along with me as bait. Handsome fellow, but he did me no good at all."

"You should take the sergeant, sir," said a captain. "He has three girls and all of them have cars."

"I know," said the colonel. "That fellow has a secret weapon."

He sighed heavily.

The sticky bomb had just come into use at that time. The colonel had a case of them, which had never been opened. He'd never seen one himself.

"Shall we have a look?" said his major, picking up an iron container about twice the size of a pear and the same shape. He held it gingerly by the stem.

"I've never done this before," he said.

He pried at something and remarked: "The damn things are tricky, they tell me."

"Why don't you practice all this outside first?" said the colonel.

"Oh no, I'll make it all right. Ah, there she is now."

The case split open like a nutshell and the major took out a glistening sticky pear which he held daintily by its iron stem. He sniffed at it.

"Smell," he said. "Just like Tanglefoot flypaper."

It smelled exactly like Tanglefoot flypaper.

"When you throw it against a tank," said the major, "they tell me a glass bottle inside breaks and the whole thing flattens out like a pancake and sticks to the tank until it explodes."

"Hang a dozen of them around to get the flies," said the colonel.

I've never heard much about the sticky bomb since. I think it was a good idea but hard to apply. Applying a sticky bomb to a tank was something like putting salt on a bird's tail if the bird bristled with machine guns.

That ended our visit to the front. We drove back to our sandbagged hideaway, cooked another can of spaghetti for our batman, Walters, slept poorly, and next morning started back for the trucking camp, which seemed worlds away. I was surprised when we got there in an hour. Walters seemed faster and more certain of himself getting away from the front than getting to it.

I tried to write some stirring pieces about the Great Adventure but they didn't come off.

There was the additional problem of getting the stories past the censors, since I wasn't accredited to go to the front. At first I

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thought of buttonholing some pleasant-looking censor in the hallway and whispering to him confidentially:

"Look, this is between you and me and I want your word that you will forget I said anything at all if it's out of line, but I've just been to the front and I'm wondering can you censor my story just for the military information or do you have to take into consideration how the material was obtained?"

I thought better of this. Instead I operated on the theory that whichever censor got the story would never bother his head wondering whether I was accredited or not. To save him bother, I made frequent reference to my escort so he might surmise, if he chose and if it would save him any bother, that I was accompanied by an escorting officer. If he should ask me what my escort's name was I'd say: "Walters. A splendid chap."

He didn't even bother his head. He just passed them and I hustled to the post office and sped them on their way.

CHAPTER III

Cairo

NOBODY WAS EVER TAUGHT war would be like Cairo, which is the best soldier's town up and down this warlike world—was, rather. The old Cairo of the desert war, when the name of Rommel was magic, is gone. Jerry is gone from Africa and the Eyetye is gone from the war. And the real verve is gone from Cairo, which was a gala town for the English, the Australians, the South Africans, some Americans, some Greeks, Poles, French, Czechs, Spaniards, and Canadians, and last but most important in my book, the New Zealanders, fighting men.

Once Rommel was knocked out of El Alamein, Cairo changed. I came back eight months later and it was just a tired, hot town, abounding with newspapermen who were eating their hearts out because North Africa and Sicily had stolen their show and even Montgomery and their own Eighth Army had forgotten them. It happened so quickly. A few months before Cairo had been newer than new. Then I came back and it was as melancholy as visiting the old homestead.

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But when I arrived on a blazing day, July 1, 1942, Cairo was fighting a gay, blasé war. Rommel had just landed that day at El Alamein and the flap was on. But it was a mock flap. Except for the big shots, who had the responsibility and were preparing to evacuate, and except for the Jews, who really had something to worry about, the inhabitants were cheerfully livened up by the danger. The band played sweetly that night in the delicious cool of Shepheard's garden, the scotch flowed, the women wore long gowns, and the blackout was the usual Cairo farce of leaking windows and sudden squares of light on the pavement as a soldier lurched from a bar.

Perhaps it was because Cairo was practically an open town. There's nothing like being an open town to make the inhabitants, military and civilian, look on a crisis with a cheery eye. Or perhaps it was because Egypt was neutral, still running on a peacetime basis, that Cairo had this special flavor of war and peace, enough of war to give the wine a kick and enough of peace to give it a champagne bubble. And certainly it was partly because Cairo had already seen the armies race up and down the desert for two and a half years. Victory and defeat were old in Cairo.

And the military hadn't stepped in to run the whole show. That's why Algiers was never a good soldier's town. The Army in Algiers ran nearly everything, including the good hotels. When I contrast the Aletti in Algiers, under army management, with Shepheard's or the Continental-Savoy in Cairo, under professional hotel management, I hate to think of going back to Algiers. The Army lays a dead hand on anything frothy. The British were wise enough to know that.

Perhaps it was wrong that Cairo should have been so callously and capriciously gay at this critical moment, when the war was teetering perilously on a thin edge of resistance at El Alamein. Perhaps Cairo by all moral rights should have been drab. But the soldiers coming in on leave from the desert would have been the real losers. If it had any importance one way or another, the gaiety of Cairo served as a tonic to the men who came in from the blue, as the desert was then called. They talked of Cairo (and of Alexandria too) almost as if they were home. I never heard anyone talk of Algiers as if it were home. Algiers was dreadful.

But Cairo was crazy and comfortable. It meant good hot baths in the best hotels in the world, good liquor, roof-garden dancing, houseboats of sin on the Nile, twelve-hour laundry, and all the luxuries

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of which a soldier dreams during those long months in the sand and the sun and the gritty winds.

It was an expensive town, all right. It was a rare soldier who didn't go away feeling robbed. But soldiers are born to be robbed. There's no doubt of that. And Cairo did give them a good time while it robbed them. Cairo served its purpose. I remember sitting one day on the terrace of Shepheard's when an officer from the desert, tired, dusty, with a week's growth of beard, came bounding up the steps. He looked like a messenger of disaster, haggard and worried, a fearful doubt preying on his mind. Everybody half rose from their chairs as he strode up to an officer and spoke the fateful words:

"I don't suppose the bar would be open at this time of day, would it?"

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"There are three bars open at the moment, actually," said the officer cheerily.

You couldn't have robbed that man. A drink was worth any price to him so long as it was good and well served. And for that matter Shepheard's itself wasn't exorbitant.

Money makes no difference to soldiers on leave. What torments them isn't being bilked and robbed. It's that desperate lonely feeling that their leave is sliding away and they're not having a good time. That's when they say, "But, by Christ, I'm going to have a good time," and get roaring drunk and do enjoy themselves after a fashion, spending six months' pay on a week's spree. The soldier never asks what it costs. All he wants to know is, "Can I get it?" In Cairo he could.

Cairo always had its quality of fantasy. It had the light touch. There was enough of *The Arabian Nights* still about it so that it was rascally, yet not sinister. I wouldn't go so far as to say there was anything enchanted about Cairo, but it did have its unreality.

During one of my nearly continuous series of difficulties with the Public Relations I spent most of an afternoon on the Shepheard's terrace, fighting off the shoeshine boys, the flies, the guides, and the gully-gully men, meanwhile drinking a bit of lemon squash to comfort my bruised spirits. What the Public Relations was doing was ignoring me, although, as I had told them repeatedly, I was the Only Correspondent Representing a Newspaper from West of the Mississippi Ever to Visit the Middle East. This meant less than nothing to them.

As I sat there drinking lemon squash I had one of those rather lightheaded Cairo experiences with a gully-gully man.

You may never have run into a gully-gully man. You are sitting on the Shepheard's terrace sipping, when one of these fellows comes up in a white nightgown, saying, "Gully-gully-gully-gully-gully-gully." That's all he says—"Gully-gully-gully-gully-gully-gully," like a hen clucking.

This means he's a magician and he wants to do some tricks, which you are to pay him for, while everybody at the near-by tables gets a free look.

This gully-gully man I am talking about came up softly behind me, instead of the usual frontal approach, and said softly in my ear, so no one but I could hear him, "Gully-gully-gully-gully-gully."

"No!"

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His hand came around behind my neck until it was directly in front of my face and he opened it, palm empty, six inches before my eyes.

Suddenly a baby chick appeared in his palm, cheeping in a friendly way and struggling to free itself from the thumb and forefinger

of the gully-gully man, who just kept saying in my ear, softly so no one else could hear, "Gully-gully-gully-gully."

"*No!*" I said.

The powerful conviction came over me that this wasn't what I had come all the way to Egypt to see. I had come to see war.

"No!" I said.

"Gully-gully-gully-gully-gully-gully-gully," he said.

The chick remained struggling six inches before my eyes, and I couldn't help taking a good look at him. He was about two weeks old and his first yellow baby fluff was just giving way to some darker bristles. I think he was going to become a Rhode Island Red.

"Gully-gully-gully-gully-gully-gully," said the gully-gully man.

Suddenly before my astonished eyes there were two chicks in

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the palm of his hand, struggling and cheeping and looking me in the eye.

I swear it was impossible. The gully-gully man hadn't moved a finger, but two chicks were there.

"Gully-gully-gully-gully-gully-gully," he kept saying.

I really wanted to see his trick again but I told myself firmly that I had come thirteen thousand miles to the Middle East to do something else besides have gully-gully men make a sucker of me.

"NO!" I said.

Suddenly the chicks were gone. The open hand waggled in my face and then it was gone. I felt relieved and then I felt disappointed.

"Hey," I called, and turned around, but the gully-gully man was gone too. In two seconds he had disappeared. I felt a sudden necessity to see the trick again. I remembered how my friend Cliff Henderson told me when he came through some weeks ago that he had found a gully-gully man who knew tricks that amateur magicians would pay $100 apiece for, maybe $150.

"Hey," I shouted again, looking anxiously around for the gully-gully man, but he was gone as mysteriously as his chicks and there was behind me only a brigadier who gave me a cold look.

"Did you see a gully-gully man just now?" I asked.

"I beg your pardon," he said.

"Did you just see a man with a couple of chicks—a gully-gully man?" I asked.

"Chicks?" he said.

"Yes, one of them is going to be a Rhode Island Red and the other a Plymouth Rock."

"Hadn't you better see the manager?" he said.

I walked off in a kind of mirage, and just as I was going into the hotel I heard a voice behind me. I turned around, expecting to see a man with a couple of chicks, but it was only the waiter following me out because I had forgotten to pay him.

"You want to sign or pay?" he asked.

"I'll pay," I said.

If you want Cairo in a capsule, there it is. That was the most Cairo experience I had.

I'd never met a British Tommy until I got to Cairo. He's an experience. Probably he's the solidest, sincerest, happy-go-bloody-lucky little man who's ever existed. He can't be described. He's just wound up and goes in a style all his own, flinching less from the ills of the world than any other creature.

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Whatever comes—and to him it nearly all comes bad, since bad luck is his trademark—he meets it with a crooked grin, an appealing briskness just short of gaiety, and an unconquerable belief that it's all going to come out right in the end, especially if he can put over his latest faith, which is Communism.

I met a Tommy the first thing I stepped off the airplane at Heliopolis. Being already nearly broke, which is a sad way to begin war correspondence in Cairo, I didn't take a taxi into Cairo but lugged my bags out to the highway and started thumbing rides. The truck which picked me up was driven by my first Tommy, whom I will never forget, as I thought then that he was a special character, probably famous in his neighborhood. But of course he wasn't. He was just a regular Tommy with a furry accent that a typewriter can't reproduce. He was coming in from the desert and was going to have to drive back that night, which led him to some cheerfully profane remarks, featuring that English word which I now can't help but use myself sometimes at the wrong moment. It's catching.

In any case, it was used profusely by this truck driver, who said to me as soon as he saw the typewriter and had identified me as a correspondent:

"You can —— well tell them that the —— Jerries and the —— Eyetyes have their —— women with them up in the —— blue. All we —— get is sweet ——. It —— well ain't fair."

"I'll tell them," I told him.

"That's a gent," he said. Whenever I agreed with him, he'd class me as a gent.

"What's the toughest thing in the desert?" I asked him.

Leaving out the ——s, as they confuse the reading, I can report he said as follows:

"It's when you get a letter from home and it says that someone in the family has died. All you can do is bite your lip. There isn't anything else to do, actually."

He said he'd been in the desert seventeen months already.

"But we'll get home someday," he added cheerfully. "Then we'll go on a drunk." He leaned out of the cab and shouted to somebody in the back of the truck: "Won't we, Dickie?"

"Won't we what?" yelled Dickie.

"When we get home, we'll go on a —— boozer, won't we?"

"For a —— month," yelled Dickie. You'd have liked Dickie, too, just the way he yelled.

They dropped me off at Shepheard's, and then he and Dickie drove

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off to go up in the blue and dream of the —— boozer when they finally got home, which we all hope they did.

Of course, there were quieter Tommies, who thought more sentimentally about home. But they had a more forthright way of being homesick than our homesick boys. They didn't get droopy. They were just rather quiet and a little lonely-looking when you'd see them in a restaurant. Sometimes they'd have a book propped up before them as they ate their eggs and chips (french fries) and drank a glass of beer, which is the mark of a lonely man. But they didn't drip and fall apart with self-pity. They were solid as the others. I took one of this type to luncheon one day to get a story about water supply in the desert. For twelve months and sixteen days he had been driving a water truck in the desert without leave. Now he was on the second day of a five-day holiday and feeling rather disappointed because he wasn't making the most of it.

"It's a matter of not knowin' what to do with yourself when you comes into town," he said. "I wants to get away from soldiers, and all I sees here in Cairo is soldiers. I'm not a 'eavy drinkin' man. I only drinks my beer so I can't 'ave a big go like some of the chaps. I've been to three cinemas, but that's no way for a man to spend 'is leave. A chap like me 'as no real chance to meet a decent woman, so what's he to do, actually?"

He spoke a little, rather diffidently, about his family in England.

"I 'ave a wife and pigeon pair," he said.

"What's a pigeon pair?" I asked him.

"Don'cher know a pigeon pair? That's one of each. A pigeon pair, we calls it at 'ome."

He said he wrote his wife once a week and every time there was a sizable battle that he thought would get a play in the papers he sent her a canned cable, costing fifty cents, so she'd know he was alive.

He was a touchingly decent fellow. Being only two days out of the desert, he must have been hungry for some good, rich, expensive foods. But, out of politeness and a nice desire to save me an expensive meal, he said he wasn't wanting much.

"I'll just have some lamb," he said, "and some chips."

"How about some string beans and some melon?"

"Naow," he said, "what's the use of me gettin' to expect too many things? It'll only make it 'arder when I go back up."

"Coffee?" I asked.

"Tea," he said.

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He gave the warmest, most understandable description I've yet heard of the British soldier's love for tea.

"It's when you gets moody that you needs it," he said. "Take when the mile [mail] comes around. You haven't had a letter for two months. They distributes the mile and everyone gets his letter but you don't. You gets moody and there's only one thing to do. You starts your fire and you gets crackin' on brewin' up some tea. Then you feels better."

It would be absolutely impossible to explain to him some of our jokes about English tea drinking. It would be like trying to tell an American how comical he is drinking his morning cup of coffee.

But most soldiers must go on a bit more of a beat-up, as the English call a bender, and Cairo provided them the means, even to speak-easies after drinking hours. With a British captain, fresh in from the desert, I climbed four dingy flights one night to what he called a blind tiger. He knocked three times and after an interval a shadow appeared behind the cheap stained-glass door. A greasy Arab in an apron peered out.

"A-a-a-ahh," he said when he saw the captain.

A few officers were standing around with glasses in their hands while behind a tiny, brightly lighted bar, the sort of bar that a handy fellow with tools builds in his home, a very young colored girl was mixing drinks.

In this kind of place you could pick up all the stories from the desert you'd want. This night I met an English tank retriever. I think tank retrieving is now more or less in obsolescence—in the midst of a battle, at least, which is the time when it's dramatic. The anti-tank gun has become too deadly. It would knock off the retrievers like pigeons. But in those pre-El Alamein days it was still practiced and it was a wild life.

The poor retriever had to drive out in the middle of a plain while the tanks were still bulling around and pick up the ones which had been knocked for a loop but hadn't been set afire. The crews were probably still alive in them. Unprotected by armor, with shells whizzing by, the retriever had to pull up by a knocked-out tank and laboriously pull it aboard his low trailer with an agonizingly slow winch arrangement. Even then he wasn't ready to start lumbering for home. He had to draw up behind a second knocked-out tank, hitch it onto the rear of the trailer to be dragged. Only then could he groan slowly out of the arena and over a rise. His best hope was that a lot of dust had been kicked up, obscuring the view.

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And his principal comfort, if any, was that Jerry meanwhile was out in the same battlefield with his tank retrievers, sweating like — and catching hell from the British artillery.

It's probably a fable, but this tank retriever told me that sometimes the British and Jerry tank retrievers passed close enough to exchange cigarettes. They would never think of exchanging shots, as they had only deep sympathy for one another's occupation.

Being taken prisoner and then escaping was another art which thrived in those days but is dying now. It's a news story today when a man gets away from the enemy. But in those desert years it wasn't worth a mention. I met four men in the speak-easy that night who'd been in the bag.

When a desert battle got moving, it moved so fast that shortly the two sides had changed partners. Everybody was apt to be behind everybody. There were never enough guards to guard all the prisoners. Pretty soon they began to overflow or were overrun by a new advance of their own side. The two armies were actually like two snakes, trying to swallow each other, beginning at the tail. It couldn't be done. Those were great days. It was a better war then than it is now. The war's gotten tired now. (I'm writing this in Naples.)

The war has gotten down to a business of bloodletting. Jerry isn't trying to win any more. He's only trying to make us pay so much in blood and dollars that we'll give him some kind of standoff. The old dash has gone from the battle. No longer are there those mad, gallant, exciting races back and forth across the desert with no one getting killed but soldiers. No women, no babies, no old men. These fought-over towns in Sicily and Italy are depressing.

I loved Cairo and the desert, too, I guess, although I didn't see too much of the desert because of my unpleasant relations with the Middle East Public Relations. During the entire term of my stay I never got accredited to visit the front or to take part in any genuine military activities. It's a long story why the Only Correspondent Representing a Newspaper from West of the Mississippi Ever to Visit the Middle East couldn't get accredited. They had some justice on their side, I suppose, and they behaved toward me with that curious British sense of fair play which I think an American will never quite understand. When I did go off to the front without permission, they never took advantage of their power to stop my stories. They took it as a defeat in a game we were playing. They disciplined me in other ways but they didn't chop off my head, not

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until the end, at least, when I went to the well once too often and covered the first phase of the Battle of El Alamein from the kick-off until the sorry day when I was flown back to Cairo in disgrace and finally expelled. But even then they let my stories on the battle go, although after a considerable delay. It was a great satisfaction to me later to learn that even though it arrived six weeks late my story of the first night at El Alamein ran six columns across the top of page 1 of the San Francisco *Chronicle*. El Alamein was a great experience, and for five days I wallowed in it.

But everything in the Middle East was fascinating at this period. And Cairo, where I came and went and came and went during intervals between trips to Palestine, Malta, Gibraltar, Eritrea, and Ethiopia, never lost her variety. It was the fashion then for all the combat men to run down Cairo and to hold the Cairo headquarters officers in contempt. They had a variety of contemptuous names for GHQ types. They called them the Groppi Guards (Groppi's being a dancing and dining place); and the Gezira Grenadiers (after the Gezira Club, where cricket was played); and the Shepheard's Short Range Desert Group (a play on the famous Long Range Desert Group, which used to go on months-long expeditions behind the German lines, mapping, spying, and raiding). The most vicious term was the Gabardine Swine. At times I took this criticism rather seriously and looked on the Cairo life as a scandal. But since then I've visited some other headquarters towns—New Delhi, for example—and have found it's always the same old story: the combat troops scorning the handsome lads who surround the generals. Even Algiers, which was unattractive enough, finally earned itself the unflattering name, the Ice Cream Belt. One night in the desert we were going over this old, old feud and I finally asked a British major what happened when men fresh from the lines met some of the Gabardine Swine.

"Would they drink together," I asked, "or would they ignore each other?"

"Oh, they'd drink together," he said. "In fact, I can almost tell you how the conversation would go. The Swine would say:

" 'Look, old boy, I'd offer you a drink but I'm absolutely flat. You know how Cairo is: your pay's gone before you collect it.'

"And then our man would say:

" 'See here, I'm sorry. I meant to have asked you to have a drink before. Let's stop in here. I've wads of money. Really. Wads of it. You know we can't spend a farthing up in the blue.'

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"And the Swine would say:

" 'That's damn decent of you, old boy. Next time you're in Cairo . . .' "

The Gezira Club, I guess, was the focal point of irritation. And it must be admitted it was ridiculous for a wartime capital. Located on a huge island which split the Nile, it covered what appeared to be a hundred acres with a faultless lawn, where the cricketeers made merry. There was a clubhouse with a terrace giving on a swimming pool which was lively with young officers and the prettiest of the Cairo girls. Luncheon could be served there and all kinds of drinks. There were tennis courts and a croquet ground and a bar, of course, and the whole thing was exclusively enclosed within an aristocratic stone wall. No wonder the men out in the sand for months on end used to curse the Gezira Grenadiers, who lunched there every day, getting a smooth tan without desert sores. But it did no harm, probably, and it was no more elaborate than the Cecil Hotel in Delhi. And I guess there are plenty of country clubs around Washington where *our* Gabardine Swine play. But in Cairo it probably seemed worse because we were within an afternoon's drive of the German lines.

But Cairo wasn't all aristocratic. There were cheap places too. I remember in particular a sixty-cent dinner one night which will give you an idea of another facet of Cairo life. It may sound fairly astonishing. But, myself, I had gotten so used to it by that time I would never have written a story, had not Squadron Leader Oglethorpe of the RAF suggested it might make amusing reading at home. However, you'll have to meet another gully-gully man. Can you stand it? If you can't, don't go to Cairo. They're everywhere.

The action began with soup. Someone said, "Hey, George," and I said, "What?"

They all called me George in Egypt. All the Arabs called everybody George. They'd have called a general George if a general ever landed in a sixty-cent restaurant. And on our part we called the Arabs George. Sometimes it was confusing.

So I heard someone say, "George," and I said, "What?"

But this George was "Georging" three officers at a neighboring table. He wanted to give them a shine.

"Imshay, yallah, get the hell out of here, George," shouted all the officers automatically.

"Very good shine, only one half piastre, you pay what you like, George," said the Arab. "No good shine, no pay."

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"Kiss off, George," shouted the officers.

"Brown shoe polish very good," said George, wrapping his white nightgown around him and settling down to do a shine. "You want good shine with brown polish, hey, George? I give it you."

All at once the three officers shouted an unprintable thing to George. They didn't tell him to kiss off. They used that word which I can't put in black and white. Old George kissed off in my direction.

"Shine, George?" he asked.

"Imshay, yallah, George," I shouted.

Everyone shouts at George. The word "George" is always used in a loud, angry tone, often accompanied with other words I can't use here.

"Very good shine, only one half piastre. No good, no pay. Brown shoe polish," said George.

They always tell you when they've got brown shoe polish, as the shine boys have a very bad name around here for shining your brown shoes with black shoe polish when you are not looking.

"All right, George," I told him. "Very good shine. No good, no pay."

They were bringing on my fish at the moment, it being a meatless day. I put one foot out for George to shine my right shoe and ate my fish cocked around at an angle.

While this George was shining my shoes another George came up with a tray of toilet articles and said:

"American toothpaste, very cheap. You pay what you like."

I picked a toothpaste and offered him a price I liked.

"No good," he said. "Look, George, I make you price."

He made me a price and because it was easier than looking for a place to buy toothpaste I paid this George what he asked.

"You want comb? I make you good price on comb, George," he said alluringly.

"Kiss off, George," I told him.

"All right, very good," he said, and kissed off, going over to the three officers and saying to them:

"English toothpaste, very cheap. You pay what you like."

"Imshay, yallah, George," shouted the officers.

Meanwhile the George at my shoes was wrestling very hard with his rags, making the right shoe squeak. This was a sign he was through with that shoe. They never tell you when they're through. They only make this squeaking noise. Then you are supposed to change feet.

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While I was changing feet a boy came through with fruit called apple custard. You can buy your fruit separate from the restaurant by patronizing these small merchants.

"Very good, George," he said to me. "You no like, no pay."

He also had some mangoes, but I can't stand mangoes so I bought my dessert of apple custard fruit.

All these fellows were running around in Arab nightgowns.

They were serving me chips when the gully-gully man came in.

He didn't even ask my permission to come around my table, he just kept circling around, saying, "Gully-gully-gully," and producing chicks from his nightshirt. Finally I gave him permission to do me a trick or two and he had me choose a card.

"Show it to them," he said, pointing to the officers at the next table.

I showed them the ten of diamonds. They nodded and I put it back in the deck and shuffled. The gully-gully man riffled through the deck until he came to the jack of spades.

"Gully-gully-gully, there it is," he said.

"Gully-gully-gully, it isn't," shouted the three officers.

The gully-gully man looked downhearted. He stared in disbelief at the pack and all of a sudden without his moving a muscle the ten of diamonds popped six inches out of the center of the pack and fell on the floor.

"Gully-gully-gully," he said, and lit a wad of string, which smoked and smelled and finally disappeared while he did another card trick. I forgot all about the string until he had finished the trick, when he opened his mouth and there was the string still smoldering and smoking.

"Gully-gully-gully," he said.

The next thing I knew he made a lightning move and pulled a chick out of my shirt.

"Gully-gully-gully," he said.

The following moment I shuddered and nearly upset the table. There was another chick inside my shirt being pursued by a small green snake.

I was going all over myself like a man with ticks when he reached inside with another lightning grasp and brought out four chicks and one snake.

"Gully-gully-gully," he said.

"Thanks, George," I said, and tipped him and went on to my

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dessert, while the three officers beckoned George over to do a few tricks for them.

That's dinner in Cairo, George. All of you readers are George, too, from now on, women and children included.

CHAPTER IV

Malta and Gibraltar

Because of my unaccredited status it sometimes seemed as though I were constantly being involved in Rover Boy stuff. Boy Scout or whatever you want to call it. Amateur stuff. It was a painful thought. However, I preferred it. Otherwise I would have begun to suspect I had a bad character, since nearly everyone of my reportorial enterprises seemed to be illegitimate. By playing this Tom-the-fun-loving-Rover-Boy role I could wear a boyish grin and call it a prank—instead of nervously springing around every time I saw a Public Relations officer, and shouting to him:

"I didn't do it. Anyway I didn't know it was against the rules. How was I to know? How was I to know? I'm a stranger here."

It was annoying but it served the purpose. I certainly got around, carried along more by events than by my own plotting. And there was always a loophole, since there were so many rules only a Philadelphia lawyer could figure them out.

About the best trip I got was a Mediterranean cruise in a Liberator bomber with the RAF. It ended in my getting grounded for seven weeks. As soon as I stepped off the plane at the Suez Canal, concluding the junket, a cheerful RAF officer greeted me with:

"Well, cocky, they've been telephoning from Cairo about you every day. There's a bloody squadron leader's going to chop you in pieces."

"What have I done?" I asked.

Well, it was a great trip. It was worth it. You'll never get a trip like it by staying home and obeying the rules.

We started to go just to Malta, taking off at midnight from an advanced base in the middle of the desert where we were briefed in a windy operations shed by lamplight while dust blew through the chinks in suffocating gusts.

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"I wouldn't worry if there's an air raid on when you approach Malta," said the briefing officer. "Just circle the island, keeping low until it's over. The Spits will give you cover. If the runway's hit, continue circling until the craters have been filled."

Half an hour later our big ship was crouched at the end of the runway, blacked out except for a ghostly illumination of the dials. The wind was driving the dust through the moonlight and through the navigator's dome I could see the stars.

"Ready, chaps?" asked Wing Commander MacNair, turning his head to the huddle of bodies behind him.

"Right-ho, sir," came half a dozen voices.

He laid a big paw across the four throttles and shoved them forward. We shivered out of a standstill and went rushing through the dust swirls into a perspective of pinprick lights, invisible from the sky, which marked the strip. Then we were in the air, out of the dust, and the moonlit desert was falling off below. The Mediterranean was slowly unreeling ahead and the moonlight lay steadily on our wings. We flew until dawn. The light was still gray when Malta hove into view, a flat relief map in desert beige on the white-blue bosom of the sea. The whole island was in easy view at once. It couldn't have been more than a quarter the size of Catalina Island. Curving stone walls wove a curious pattern, intricate and ancient, around her thousands of tiny fields. Scattered here and there, only a mile or so apart, a surprising number of cities and towns in brown stone stood out like a sort of crusted caramel icing. The airfields, skillfully camouflaged and hard to pick out, looked crowded and uncomfortable in this age-old congestion.

All the airport crews seemed to drop all work to throng around our plane.

This was about the first of August 1942, when Malta was really on the ropes. She was running out of food, gasoline, and ammunition. Even the famous Maltese ack-ack gunners had to ration their shots when the enemy came over. Our Liberator and the three others which followed us onto the runway were flying in aerial torpedoes to supply still another deficiency. It was the blackest time in Malta's history, just before the famous lifesaving convoy came through.

It was an experience to be there. Malta had an atmosphere of crisis and destiny. Of course no one mentioned the fact. That would have been a bad show. But she was under strain. It was one of those rare times in men's lives when the common interest is so great

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that it wipes out personal ambitions and differences. Men were pulling together with real good will, submerged in the common cause. It was a time of high feeling, almost as emotional as being in love, and just as hard to describe. Nobody said anything or did anything to show it. But the deep feeling colored everything.

More than a year later I came back to Malta on her day of triumph, when the surrendered Italian Navy dropped anchor off the island. That was a great moment too, I suppose. Yet emotionally it was in a minor key. The invisible bond of camaraderie, of common suffering and common cause, had been broken. Malta had become just another collection of normal selfish human beings going about their daily tasks. As a banker in Valletta told me:

"The real celebration in Malta isn't now. It was when that convoy arrived. You should have seen that."

Malta's day of triumph, when the common bond could be relaxed, was ordinary. The other days were rare in men's lives.

In any case I saw my first air raid in Malta, and it was an anticlimax. Like everything else in war, it was so different from what I had expected. It was a high-level bombing, and to watch a high-level bombing you must be nearly as trained as a bacteriologist is to watch microbes. You can't just look at the thing like you look at a ball game. If you're interested in how a high-level bombing really appears to novices, listen to this:

"Ahhh, there they are!" exclaimed a flying officer. "Five bombers, and I'd say at least twenty fighters."

I couldn't see a thing, myself.

"They're just in front of those newest ack-ack puffs," said the flying officer.

I could see the puffs, but otherwise I couldn't see a thing.

"The ack-ack's all around them now," he said. "You must see them now."

I couldn't see a thing. Three other officers came over to assist me in seeing the raid.

"Look now," said one. "You see those three ack-ack puffs that make a triangle? They're just below that."

I couldn't see a thing.

"Now see here," said the officer, "look straight up, just over that rock. They're just coming there now."

I couldn't see a thing.

"There go the bombs," shouted another officer.

"Yes, there they go," shouted my officer.

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I couldn't see a thing.

"God, this is fascinating," said an officer. "I could actually see the sunlight glint on the bombs. I've never seen that before, actually."

I couldn't see a glint.

"Actually I've never seen that before myself," said another officer, "although I have seen them glint in the moonlight. Just a chance."

I never got a chance.

In rapid series, over at the airport, fountains of dust, dirt, and rock spouted into the air. A few moments later the concussions came, a kind of terrifying wind which combs your hair for you. The officers were still interested in the planes.

"I say," said one, "there's a Spit sticking into them now. You see it up there? He's fired his first burst and he's coming out of his dive below them."

I couldn't see a thing.

"But you must be able to see something, man. They're just over that church steeple now. Look, there's another Spit sticking into them."

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I couldn't see a thing.

"They're gone now," said an officer.

They all turned to go away.

"Look," I said. "There's a couple of planes chasing each other."

"Where?"

"Just over there. Over that bush. Don't you see them?"

"I can't see a thing," said all the officers at once.

That made me feel better.

The brigadier general who commanded the first American fighters in the Middle East later told me it was no sign of half blindness or even of stupidity to fail to see the planes. Pilots with the best of eyes have the same trouble until they *learn* to see. Looking into infinity for a nearly transparent speck takes a special kind of focusing.

We'd hardly had breakfast before we received orders to fly to Gibraltar, pick up another load of torpedoes, and ferry them back to Malta. This was a baksheesh trip to me. It was more than I'd been promised. Something told me, too, that Cairo would soon be calling that airport on the Suez Canal, inquiring after my health. However, we wouldn't take off for Gibraltar until night. I had the rest of the day for sight-seeing in Valletta, which was then the most bombed place on earth. There wasn't enough gasoline for the squadron to spare me a car, so I had to walk five miles down to Valletta and five miles back. By the time I got back after witnessing a couple of more air raids I was getting a little tired. I was just starting a quick nap in the operations room when a delayed-action bomb the Germans had dropped some time earlier went off fairly close. The noise wasn't so bad, but the concussion was like a clip on the chin. It ruined the nap. For the next five days, in fact, one thing after another stole my sleep away. When I finally got back to the Suez Canal I was at my all-time most tired. It's too bad because I can't remember much about the rest of the trip. The only other memory of Malta, for example, which stands out in my mind was the mustaches, which is trivial. It was my first RAF experience. The RAF goes in heavily for mustaches.

There are neat cropped ones of the Roscoe Turner type. There are bushy but still restrained ones, and there are many long curling blond mustaches which make the wearer look quaint and old-fashioned.

It was hard for me to imagine these men with curling blond mustaches shooting into the sky in a Spitfire to do business with

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a goggle-eyed evil man-from-Mars type of Nazi pilot. But they did very well indeed.

We timed our take-off so we'd arrive at Gibraltar at dawn. As extra passengers we carried four sailors in the waist of the ship, bound for home. They'd never been up in a plane, although they'd all been down at least once in a ship. They were survivors, all, going back to U.K. to find a new ship.

They had scarcely a word to say but huddled nervously in the darkness. This silence was better, anyway. When they did talk I couldn't understand them because of the way they massacred the English language. It's embarrassing to have someone tell you something four times in the English language and then have to tell him: "I don't get it."

The principal thing I learned in Gibraltar was that the place was hardly fortified. Gibraltar was a false front. Until after the war had begun there hadn't been a new tunnel built in the Rock, they told me, for a hundred and forty years. They were anxious to get the story out so if something happened they wouldn't be crucified. The only censorship instruction I had was: "Don't use the word 'impregnable.' "

Meanwhile they were hot on a new tunnel-building program to make the old so-called honeycomb look like the nineteenth-century program it was. In fact, they said, there had never been a honeycomb of tunnels in the Rock. All this was part of the Gibraltar myth.

"Write the story," they said, "but we predict it will never be printed."

They cited case after case of writers who had visited them, been

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told the true situation, and then had written the usual Gibraltar story about the honeycomb of tunnels, brilliantly lighted, some broad enough for two-way traffic, others with railroads running through them, and generally describing the Rock as bristling with guns.

There hadn't been a new gun emplacement established for more than a hundred years prior to the war, they said, although naturally the old guns had been replaced with more modern ones—not too modern.

I wrote the story and it was printed finally, I believe, in a newspaper Sunday supplement.

After flying all night and reporting all day I looked forward to a good night's sleep. But none of that. Wing Commander Gilbert of the North Front RAF station had arranged that Wing Commander Terry McComb of the Coastal Command should take me on an all-night anti-submarine patrol from Gibraltar to the Balearics and back.

"But——" I said.

"You can't miss it," they said. "Full moon tonight."

It was the "Moonlight Sonata" to the music of Pratt and Whitney engines. On a fragrant night, with the moon at the absolute full, the Mediterranean world was filled with so much soft silver that reality seemed to dissolve into a dream.

The silver lay motionless on the wings of our plane as we pulled imperceptibly through the air. It flickered and glittered along the crinkled surface of the sea. It lay like dust in a faint humid haze. And as we circled Gibraltar on the way out it touched the Rock with white splendor.

Of course to all the rest of the world it was just another night of the full moon. But when you are flying through the silver all night long, dropping off and then waking in it again, with the moon in a different quarter, it gets into you a bit. You see more moonlight than you ever saw before in your whole life.

Hour after hour, staring at the shiny, scaly surface of the moon track, which is the only place the black form of a submarine breathing on the surface would show, you go into a mild hypnosis. You look without remembering what you are looking for. You think of a thousand other things, then are suddenly jerked back into consciousness by a dark shape in the silver—an offshore rock.

Or, glancing ahead, you see a yellow light on the smooth surface. The plane curves off course and swoops for a closer look. It's a fishing boat, heading for the coast of Spain.

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From time to time the navigator would lean forward with his map and by the light of an electric torch would show us our position.

To the left on the North African coast there were almost always the scattered late lights of a city in view, French or Spanish. As I write this it seems again as if it were something that only happened the night before last. It hardly seems possible that I have just visited some of those then remote and mysterious North African cities. We couldn't even fly over them then. So much has changed since that summer, and almost all for the better.

As it got later, it seemed to get warmer and we pulled open the windows to let in a rush of fresh air. Just before dawn, with the moon still riding high, we saw lights on our right. We had reached the bottleneck of the Mediterranean, commanded by Gibraltar. The lights were the towns of La Linea and Algeciras.

Of course we hadn't seen even the suspicion of a periscope. I was certain we wouldn't before we even started. That night just wasn't made for action.

I had two more days in Gibraltar and then we took off again for Malta with a load of torpedoes. At Malta a new order awaited us. On the way back to the Suez Canal we were to bomb Navarino Bay in the Peloponnesus south of Athens, where the Italians had four cruisers, some destroyers, and a nice fat merchant vessel. I was happy but nervous. I was also worried. I knew that in Cairo the accredited correspondents were planning to draw straws to see who would be the first to go on a bombing raid with the Liberators. It would be a great triumph to beat the accredited correspondents to it, but I also feared it would cause trouble. My fears were well grounded.

By this time I was flying with a Kenya pilot, Johnny Dyer, a good boy if there ever was one. I went to the briefing with him and the officer told us to go after the M.V., meaning the merchant vessel. The British are the greatest people for calling things by their initials.

"If you can't find it, or it has moved, go after the warships," he said.

We took off after midnight on a bumpy airport which so jounced the plane around that the navigator's sextant fell out of the bombing coop. For the next few hours, through the interphone, Harry squealed and complained vigorously and predicted we would never find the target but would probably end up bombing our own base. The pilot told him to pipe down and navigate.

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I sat in the waist of the ship, nervous, with earphones clamped to my head, drinking in every word, as if life depended on what they said. About half an hour before our estimated time for arrival the pilot broke a silence by telephoning to the navigator:

"Is that an island ahead?"

"It's a peninsula," said the navigator.

"I think it's an island," said the pilot.

Whatever it was, it was the target. Searchlights suddenly began swinging wildly around the sky, guns began winking little red winks at us, and strange-looking fireworks like Japanese lanterns strung together, which the RAF calls onions, began twisting into the air.

So much for the navigator's inability to find the target after his sextant had fallen out of the plane. It was a dead landfall. I'm going to write a big piece about navigators someday. They're eerie people, like photographers.

It all came about so suddenly that it took me some time to get frightened. We were fairly low, but things still looked small. The searchlights were all pointing in the wrong direction and the ack-ack was going in all directions. I really felt no pain until a searchlight, nosing blindly around in the sky, stared directly into my window. Good, kind God! I jumped back as if someone had just caught me peeking into the showers of the Marlborough School for Girls. I really felt caught.

The plane, which had been very black inside, suddenly was quite well illuminated. I saw a machine gunner fooling around with some stuff. When the light came in he lifted his head in a sort of startled way. Then he went back to his tinkering.

It lasted only a couple of seconds, maybe five. Then the pilot slued the bomber around in a wild way, which made me forget other perils, and we dropped out of the beam. I got courage enough to look out again, and the searchlight was waving in the air behind us, poking at nothing, very blindly.

Meanwhile I had jerked my earphones loose from the plug and wasn't hearing the chatter, thereby missing the main thing. I was too excited even to think about the dropping of the bombs.

The ack-ack was all over the black landscape below. It was just tiny red flashes, and then there were lights in the sky when the shots exploded.

But the aiming wasn't terrific. Meanwhile we had left the searchlights behind, and finally we had left the ack-ack behind, and I suddenly realized we had passed out of the danger zone.

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I jumped to my feet and gave a cowboy yell of joy and shouted, "I did it, I did it, I did it," although I had done absolutely nothing except dodge back from that searchlight.

Then I was embarrassed because I thought everyone had heard me through the interphone. That was when I discovered the interphone was pulled out of the plug. While I was fumbling around to put it back again I noticed the plane was swinging around and making for what seemed to me a very foolish direction. We were heading back for those searchlights.

"What's up, fellows?" I asked when I got the phone fixed.

Then came the greatest shock of my life. It had never occurred to me we hadn't dropped the bombs.

"In the haze we couldn't find the target," said the pilot. "We're going over again."

As I said, I had felt very little fear. But this was too much. My legs began to shake. They actually quivered, and there was nothing I could do to stop it. I tried.

They worked pretty good, though. I suddenly remembered my parachute and went padding along the walls, slapping and feeling, trying to find the darn thing in the dark. At last I found it and hooked it on. It dangled so awkwardly I thought it was on wrong and stumbled around until I found the machine gunner, who was still tinkering with belts of bullets.

"How is it?" I asked him.

"How's what?"

"The parachute."

"What's wrong with it?"

"Is it on right?"

"Yes. What's the matter?"

By this time we were over the target again and I dashed over to my window. The red lights were winking and the onions were coming up. They had a terrific amount of flak but it was completely wild. It was almost comical. When we were over one end of the target the light and the flak would be going up at the other. When we got to the other, the lights and flak would reverse. In peacetime I thought the Italians were fine. In war they're ideal. Only one shell exploded near us, giving the ship a bump and causing me to jerk the earphones out again.

In my earnestness to see the target I sprang from window to window and took quick looks down the glass escape hatch, but could

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see nothing but a silver haze, the reflection of the moon on still waters, and the red winks of the ack-ack.

We passed out of range again and I dashed back to the phone plug to see if we had dropped the bombs. Harry was saying to Johnny:

"What do you want to do now?"

I thought Johnny would certainly say: "Get rid of those blankety-blank bombs and let's get out of here."

But he said in a very steadying voice:

"We'll go over the target again and drop a flare. On the way back we'll be able to find the ship."

This meant two more trips across that target. I couldn't believe it. I was so terrified and exasperated, and felt so robbed and cheated by this repetition of danger, that I couldn't even think. It seemed like an endless search that could only result in disaster. In two more runs they were bound to hit us.

I decided to try the escape hatch and see if it would work. I gave it such a jerk, just as Johnny was resuming his evasive lurching tactics, that I nearly fell out. The rush of wind scared me worse than the flak and I slammed it shut again.

This was just a little old one-plane raid. There was no one else around to divert attention from us. So far as they were focusing, the Italians were focusing on our plane.

We went over the target again. Same old story. I couldn't see a thing. The flare didn't seem to help. As a matter of fact, although I crouched over the escape hatch and watched carefully, I couldn't even see the flare.

But at the last moment on the interphone I heard Harry say:

"Johnny, there they are. See that black? They've thrown up a smoke screen."

The poor fools, who were safe as though in a church in that silvery haze, finally managed to draw attention to themselves by this black smoke.

We swung around again for that fourth run across the target. Johnny stopped his lurching, evasive tactics and settled into the smooth bombing run. I heard the order to open the bomb doors and felt the ship vibrate with the additional drag. The flak was coming up again. The searchlights were after us. My hair was on end.

"They're gone," said Harry.

The bombs were gone. Thank God, thank God, thank God. I

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didn't even pay attention to the wild raging chatter that was going on in the interphone until I heard Harry, the bombardier, say defensively, for the fifth time probably:

"But they slipped. It wasn't my fault."

Everyone was wild. They accused Harry of getting nervous. Harry insisted the bombs just slipped, through no fault of his. In any case they'd fallen about five seconds early, which is a lot of yards. But I didn't care. I was just glad to have the bombing over.

I slept like a baby on the corrugated floor until one of the machine gunners shook my shoulder. The sun was out and my ears were paining from the loss of altitude. In a few minutes we touched wheels to our home airport and the cheerful RAF officer was saying:

"There's a bloody squadron leader's going to chop you in pieces."

That was Squadron Leader George Houghton, head of RAF Public Relations. But George is the best. When he heard how I didn't understand the rules he let me off with a seven weeks' grounding instead of expelling me as he was being pressed to do. He racked me back for it, though. That was a bawling out. But he ended on the right note.

"I'd probably have done it myself," said George.

I hope George comes to southern California someday. I'll try to get him a date with Grable or somebody.

CHAPTER V

Alexandria

AFTER I WAS GROUNDED I hung around Cairo a few days, writing about the Shepheard's terrace, moonlight cruises on the Nile, a visit to the Pyramids, etc., but this got old. Moreover, the American Public Relations officer, who seemed to be no admirer of mine, had me in and made dire remarks about the possible necessity of expelling me back home. I left that night for Alexandria to cool off, catching the fast train, a two-car Diesel, which made a noise like an automobile and slid through the night like a flat-wheeled streamliner. With the mellow night air blowing in the windows and the lights blacked out, it was a sweet, restful ride of three hours, ending in a drafty, dark station.

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As the little train felt its way deftly through the dark railroad yards we passed a long line of ghostly white coaches with great red crosses painted on their sides, a somber, silent reminder of how much closer to war Alexandria was than Cairo.

Alex was blacked out like a tomb. It was midnight. Traffic had died and there were only the shadows of a few taxis in the square before the station. The first two hotels were full, with rooms reserved for three or four days ahead. In the end I was deposited before a narrow structure with a shaky elevator where there was a surprisingly clean room for a surprisingly high price.

I divided the next days fifty-fifty between writing in my room and lying on the beach resting my bruised spirit. The beaches of Alexandria are wonderful; the water is wonderfully warm, and the Greek and Italian girls seemed wonderfully beautiful. I was even inspired to write a piece of fiction called *Love Story in Alex* on which my agent never gave me any report. Perhaps it was a little high-pitched in its emotional intensity. I should have introduced a little realism. In fact, I meant to, carefully recording the following beach conversation I overheard as typical. It was a Tommy talking to a Greek girl:

"You'd like England," he said. "It's a very modern country. You know—modern?"

She looked doubtful and he explained: "Modern. Modern. First-class. Trains underground, airplanes overhead, everything first-class. This country, it's—it's nothing. Sand everywhere. You've been out to the park. That's the way England is. You'd like England. When you marry, you want to marry an Englishman."

She didn't have any conversation. She just listened.

"Tell me now," he said, "in the Greek schools do they teach girls about babies and—you know—things like that?"

Here we go.

"In England," he said, "they never teach them that sort of thing in schools. They never know until they find out. It's a shame. Do they teach you that in Greece?"

"Oh yes," she said, "in Greece we learn history and Latin and mathematics." She described a whole curriculum.

"No," he said, "you don't understand. Do they teach you about babies? Does the doctor come and tell you things?"

"Oh, the doctors tell us everything," she said, rattling off more subjects, evidently taught by doctors of philosophy.

"No, no," he said. "Do they teach about babies . . . ?"

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He never did find out, and I wrote an imaginary story about an American in the RAF and an English WAAF instead of a real story about a Tommy and a Greek girl, which is probably why I never got any results.

Before long I tired of this lonely fifty-fifty life and transferred my lodgings to the Leroy Hotel, where Larry Allen, George Palmer, and various other correspondents had set up a sort of press club. This was anything but lonely. Larry, later captured on his fifth or sixth torpedoing, had a radio, and the town was full of Canadian Club and American beer. American fliers in from the desert made the room their port of call. There was always something going on, and we called it Allen's Cabaret. The most novel feature of Allen's Cabaret was Jackie, the Greek barman, who would desert his bar from time to time and enter the room, rattling dice alluringly.

While we tried to listen to the radio he would make a few passes on the floor and throw out a five-acker note and make a few more passes until somebody covered it. About a half hour later Jackie would go out with two or three pounds. Through some strange lethargy we never got together and bought our own dice. We always played with Jackie's, which was bad.

The most unexpected visitor attracted by the press at the Leroy came up unannounced one afternoon while we were sitting in the tea room, looking out the big plate-glass window onto the harbor, a satisfying sight on a brilliant August day. Jackie said she was outside and when Larry cautiously asked what she wanted he was told that she wanted to meet the famous Larry Allen.

"What does she look like?" asked Larry.

"She's strong and shy," said Jackie.

This was a perfect description. She looked like a lady wrestler but she was so shy she couldn't say a word. She just sat and simpered at Larry until we one by one excused ourselves and went by a roundabout route to Allen's Cabaret to see what we could get on the radio.

Alexandria was a great spectacle. Everything seemed to go well there. They'd even serve ice in a glass without your asking for it. It was a live town. The boys would blow in from the desert with the dust still on them, make a hasty lunge for the nearest bar, and begin to drink in a childlike and natural manner.

There was a ten o'clock curfew but everyone knew it was coming and by the closing hour the soldiers had usually taken their alcoholic objective. As they were catapulted from the restaurants into the

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blacked-out streets, they were in fine fettle, just a little ruffled by having their final drink disturbed, but not mean.

It was a great sensation to be moving slowly down the Corniche with this jovial mob. Nobody could see anybody but you could hear perfectly. All up and down the walks the songs would bud, then flower into full cry, and finally wither into one last trailing voice, always out of tune.

The Corniche in blackout with the moon just coming up was marvelous. A black precipice of hotels and apartments, curving for miles along the sea front, it would be lit by a halo on its jagged ridge and then suddenly the moon would show over and pour a strong light on the soldiers, some of them walking their girls, but most of them marching in gangs of two to twenty, bumping into one another, talking, shouting, and singing. But rarely fighting, it seemed to me. I wrote a piece about how few the fights were.

As soon as it was sent off I regretted it, as it seemed that thereafter I saw a fight every fifty feet. There was one cabaret called the Top Hat or some such name, which was a regular fighting club. It had a modernistic curved and silvered front and looked like class. The class ended at the curved front and sometimes in front of the curved front.

My attention was drawn to the Top Hat when I was out strolling one night and the doors suddenly swung open and two Tommies were violently propelled onto the sidewalk, slugging at each other, followed by their "pahls," who came out in a buzzing swarm. The proceedings were carried out very Marquis-of-Queensberry and businesslike, as if it happened twenty times a night. In a couple of seconds a circle was formed and in a couple of more seconds Soldier No. 1 had knocked Soldier No. 2 down. Somebody tolled a count but Soldier No. 2 wearily climbed to his feet, rocked a moment from alcohol and concussion, and feebly raised his hands. Meanwhile Soldier No. 1 had gallantly refrained from combat until his man had taken a proper fighting stance. Then—bang!—he let him have it again and the crowd swarmed back into the Top Hat.

I followed them in and encountered a reeling carnival of celebration such as I've never seen duplicated elsewhere. The band was blasting like an alarm. On the tiny floor two completely unconscious Scotch soldiers were flinging themselves about in a desperate reel which had nothing to do with the music. On the edge a New Zealander and a Tommy were engaged in a sodden, endless wrestling match. One of the café girls was wrenching herself from the fervid

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grasp of a leering corporal with a lantern jaw. Other soldiers were dancing with other tough-faced girls, wearing sublime grins of stupefied ecstasy, completely unconscious of the tumult, and everywhere, it seemed, soldiers were arguing, threatening one another, grabbing at waiters, waving bottles, standing up to fight, getting jerked down by a "choom," and bellowing, "——me, I'll fix the bahrstahrd."

I felt a little embarrassed about my story.

The races were on at this time, with Rommel only a few miles up the way, which seemed to me a miracle, as at home in California General DeWitt had closed Santa Anita and the other tracks with the Japs still thousands of miles away. The track was rather pretty, enclosing a golf course and a sporting club with swimming pool, tennis courts, etc. Most of the horses were Arabs, and the favorites nearly always seemed to win, paying pitiful prices. A mixed crowd of Egyptians and soldiers and sailors on leave attended. It made a pleasant and unprofitable way of spending an afternoon.

Meanwhile, I was cuddling up to the British Navy Public Relations, trying to get them to accredit me. This they wouldn't do, but they did agree to send me out for an evening on a midget destroyer that was going up the coast looking for a speck of trouble, such as beating up on a few barges, crushing a submarine with a depth charge, or attacking the coast if the flare-dropping planes spotted something good.

This ship was a lovely little thing, fragile and dainty and poisonous and absolutely laced with eerie machines that see and hear and feel and probably also smell the approach of either danger or an opportunity to knife in for a kill.

Standing on the bridge, looking into the pale light and imagining we also could see and hear, we were actually blind men and deaf men compared to her. Her machines, with their tubes and dials and electric eyes, were our fifth, sixth, and seventh senses. We on the bridge were crude lumps of clay compared to this sharp sister. She was really too fine for us. She was perfect in her way and not cursed with a brain which would make her do obstinate feminine things.

Just when the sun was turning Alexandria's white sky line to blood red, we left the harbor, steering past the other ships as easily as a speedboat.

Finally we were out in the open spaces and stepped faster on a sea as flat as a lake. And it was then that a strange thing happened. Although there was scarcely a ripple, your Middle East correspondent began to go pale. His eyes became glassy and he fell silent,

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and when the captain courteously asked him what was the matter he said:

"Nothing at all. Why?"

Perspiration sprinkled his forehead, although it was getting cooler, and he finally had to be led below, where an event occurred which left him weak but convalescent, and asking nothing but to lie down for a while.

As he was so lying there came a cry after a couple of hours: "Hands to action stations," and he had to get up and creep feebly

to the bridge to do his reporting, just in case the incredible came to pass and something actually happened.

To the left lay the Jerry coast, hidden now in darkness, and marked only by the periodic fall of flares from RAF planes lighting the way for bombers.

Once a fire sprang up as some bomb found its mark, burning a dull red against the horizon for half an hour before dying out. From time to time there were red flashings on the horizon and explosions in the air when Jerry turned on flak and gave some airman that certain feeling that there's no place like home and 180 miles an hour is damned slow.

Tracers spiraled wildly into the sky, drawing their fiery patterns,

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and from time to time the speaking system announced to us that a plane had come within an uncomfortable distance of our little lady. If there was a fault that I could find with our little lady, it was that she herself couldn't always tell a Jerry plane from a nice plane. She was rather insensitive to this broad distinction.

Just as the moon was crossing the mast we put the moon right back where she had been all night by turning around and heading for home, marking the occasion by drinking a cup of cocoa, which was probably very good but had a strange sort of taste that made a fellow want to lie down again and forget all this ship stuff.

It seemed quite a time, even lying down, before the stars grew pale and a man could sit up and draw a happy breath, peeking out the cabin window and seeing the sky line of Alexandria again. The sun looked quite cheerful as we marched back into the channel of mines, meeting the sweepers coming out. On the French ships at anchor the sailors hung over the rail, looking idly at us, while one of their members, a broad-chested fellow, stripped to the waist, industriously did setting-up exercises. Being on a ship didn't seem to bother him at all.

The next night Larry Allen and a couple of English reporters went out on a similar expedition, attacked the coast, and were in turn attacked by E-boats, one of which put a torpedo in Larry's destroyer. My destroyer, with me on shore, towed it in, undergoing an all-day attack by bombers. It made a great story and I was so sick with jealousy and despair I had to go on the wagon to keep from going on a bender. At the same time the Navy Public Relations broke off relations with me. They said I couldn't do any more navy stories. This shook me. It left me almost nothing I could report except the races and the saloons, which I had already done. I was forced to write a few thoughtful pieces, analyzing the world situation. I became an expert for a few days.

Then the RAF issued a new ruling in my case. I was notified that although still grounded I could visit bases to the rear of Alexandria during the daylight hours in the company of a Public Relations officer and with the understanding that under no circumstances would I get in a plane or stay overnight. I took to going out with Flight Lieutenant Ogilvie to a Beaufighter base, which became one of my favorite places.

Its inhabitants fascinated me because they were such tough gentlemen. The words are used literally. They were real gentlemen and they were real tough. What they were before the war I don't know.

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I suppose they were just some nice Englishmen, polite, well-spoken chaps without too much seasoning of character. They were still Englishmen but they'd gotten this tough quality. It doesn't usually happen. Most men brought up as gentlemen end up somewhat wishy-washy unless they're very rich and have to fight to stay that way.

On the other hand, very few men brought up tough ever become gentlemen in the glossy sense of the word. They may be among nature's noblemen but they don't take on the true polish ordinarily. Only a war can make tough gentlemen by the carload such as they had at this Beaufighter base.

I especially liked the commanding officer, Wincott, a gingery little giant who went out on his own operations, ground-strafing and attacking shipping. I loved to hear him talk in that nice rhythm, larded with that word which I can't repeat, telling about a sortie. The first time I called he described a ground-strafing he'd been on the day before.

"The —— were so thick on the road," he said politely, "that I —— well couldn't miss. When the —— shells hit them they'd be —— well knocked thirty feet into the air. I was —— well afraid they'd fly up and hit my —— plane."

I should have made some recordings of these tough gentlemen. I don't think there was ever a type just like them before.

There was naturally no mention of the chances he took in knocking the —— thirty feet into the air, the approximate height of his plane. If it hadn't been for my escort (I always have one of these along since my trouble) I would never have known that two of these fighter boys spun in as they came screaming down the road. They hit the deck and that was the end of them.

While Wincott talked he was playing Russian bank with one of his pilot officers. At the same time, what they were really doing was waiting to hear the strum of engines overhead, meaning that six of the boys were back.

They were absolutely tranquil to the eye, at least, slapping the cards down and saying:

"Shucks, I don't like that."

(You will have to excuse my using words like "shucks," which are so pitiful.)

"Shucks," said the pilot officer, "I'm stumped."

(You will have to excuse "stumped" too. It stands for that word which I don't dare use above all others.)

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"I'll stump you good," said the officer in command, slapping down another card.

"Shucks, I don't like that," said the pilot officer.

While they were shucksing and stumping one another, the returning fighters sounded overhead. A sergeant pushed through the tent flap to have a count.

"Shucks," said the officer in command, slapping down a card, "I don't like that."

The sergeant came back in.

"How many are there?" asked the O.C.

"They're all there."

"Good." He slapped down another card and said: "You're well stumped now."

"Shucks," said the pilot officer.

They finished the game and the officer in command said: "Let's go out and talk to them."

We drove in his staff car from one plane to another, where the crews were talking to the mechanics. When a long-distance fighter slashes at a barge it comes back with its gun ports open. If it can't find them the gun ports are closed. The planes had gone out in flights.

One flight had found the barges, the other hadn't. When we came to a ship that had its gun ports closed the O.C. would say: "No joy?"

"No joy," the pilot would say.

When we came to a ship with its ports open he would say: "What joy?"

"We plastered them up and down, dozens of shots, sir."

"Did they go up?"

"Not that we saw, sir. One of them was throwing off some smoke, but she didn't go up. I think they were armored, sir; and the shells bounced off. If they'd been the regular gasoline barges and we'd put as many shots in, they'd have gone up, certainly."

"Any other reason to think they were armored?"

"Yes sir, they had no fighter escort. They were out alone."

I also received permission to visit the newly arrived American fighters who had set up for business in a glaring salt waste, and there I met Brigadier General Auby C. Strickland working in a bit of a tattered tent that you would consider a disgrace if someone pitched it in the vacant lot next door to your house. Finding a general in such a tent was like finding a twenty-dollar bill in a pair of worn-out trousers.

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I became pretty well acquainted with the general and told him my troubles. He said he'd help me out by taking me to the front with him and obtain a special permit. At the same time I was engaged in negotiations with the South Africans to let me visit them at the front. The South Africans didn't seem to care much about my lack of accreditation or whether it was illegal for me to be at the front.

They merely pointed out that I wouldn't get caught if I visited them because they had their own censors who knew when to keep their mouths shut. So I toured the front for a few days with General Strickland, who's a real good general in my estimation, and then joined the South Africans.

CHAPTER VI

South Africans

THE ENGLISH discovered South Africa. The Dutch discovered South Africa. The French Huguenots discovered South Africa. The Germans discovered South Africa.

Everybody has discovered South Africa except us. We've missed it. But during my stay in the desert I discovered South Africa by remote control through staying with the South African Army.

South Africa's a wizard place. In those desert days that's what we called everything that was very super—wizard. You don't hear it any more now. But you used to say that a moving picture was a wizard picture or a swell girl was a wizard girl or a Spitfire was a wizard plane. And I say South Africa is a wizard place although I've never been there but have hopes.

The South Africans have a freaky twist of mind that suits me. They'd be right at home in my home in southern California. They're great for ballyhoo, sports, and stunts. Publicity is their dish.

I spent a week touring the front with their Public Relations and felt as easy as if I'd been at home working up some ideas with the Warner Brothers publicity staff. The South Africans are as keen as that. I remember particularly roaming about one afternoon with their broadcasting genius, who was suffering from a hot idea. We were stopping in for a drink at the quarters of a captain named Alex something.

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"Ach, mon," said the broadcaster before we went in. "This will be wonderful if he will do it."

South Africans talk like Dutchmen with a Scotch accent. That's how they sound when talking English, at least. The Lord only knows how to describe how they sound when they talk Afrikaans. I think they sound like Dutchmen talking Polish.

"We will let Alex have a couple of drinks first before we ask him," said the broadcaster.

What he was up to, to make it brief, was to get Alex in a good mood so that he would propose to his girl in South Africa by radio without giving her any warning in advance. Alex got in a splendid mood.

"No, mon," he said, "I won't do it."

"But, mon, just think of it," said the broadcaster. "Nobody has done it yet by wireless."

"Mon," shouted Alex, "it isn't the wireless I object to. It's the getting married."

We gave Alex up as a bad job. We were about to drive off when a towheaded little sergeant came trotting up to announce he hadn't got his seventy-five pounds yet. I think he never will get it. He was

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put on one of those broadcasts to home when every soldier says to his wife, "How are you, dearest? I hope you are all right. I hope the children are all right. I am all right. All my love, dearest."

They put the sergeant on, expecting him to speak this kind of message, but he said:

"Seventy-five pounds, Jenny. Send me seventy-five pounds. I hope you are all right."

You can see they would colonize very well in southern California. We could probably get a South African to marry a southern California girl under water in a glass swimming pool on a stage—if we could get him to marry at all.

They might be a little difficult when it came to leaving South Africa. Not knowing much about southern California, they think South Africa is the greatest spot in the world. They are actually bigger boosters than we are. They talk about the climate and scenery and girls of South Africa as if we didn't have a climate and scenery and girls. They talk about Durban as if it were Hollywood and Cape Town as if it were Santa Barbara.

Another typical thing that the South Africans did out here was to buy a ranch from an Arab—ten thousand acres, I think—for two and a half quid—about ten dollars. It probably didn't belong to the Arab in the first place, but it was a good buy. Nothing would possibly grow on it, which saved a lot of labor, but it was the best quail-hunting ground in North Africa.

I stayed at the South African press camp, which was set up in a wadi just behind the last ridge to the Mediterranean. We used to rise in civilized fashion. Just as the flies started getting active, Solomon, the South African native batman, would come padding into the tent with coffee, which we would drink before struggling out of our bedrolls.

In the camp next to ours they got up barbarously to a machine gun. There didn't seem to be any bugles or drums in the desert. Next door they just pressed the tit on a Bren. They didn't play any tunes or rhythms on it. They just turned it on until everyone for two miles around had the jerks.

After coffee we used to go over the hill for a swim in the sea and then have a breakfast of canned American bacon and fresh Egyptian eggs with fried tomatoes as a side dish. Our crockery was impressive: it bore the crest of Marshal Graziana and had been captured at Benghazi on one of the previous races up the desert. The dishes were always shined up beautifully, and you would think they were thor-

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oughly dishwashed if you had never seen a desert dishwashing, where water is scarce. The less a desert dishwashing is described the happier everyone is.

After breakfast the South Africans went into their daily publicity chores, which included motion pictures, still pictures, newspaper stories, magazine stories, and broadcasts.

A lull was on at this time. There was only one thing worthy of note during my stay: a farmer boy got touched with glory.

He came over the hill in the sunset, all alone, with his rifle on his shoulder, not knowing what to expect. If he'd had any hint, the quiet little drama would have been ruined. There was no way he could know. What he did had happened many weeks ago.

He laid his gun carefully against a tent pole and reported to his

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brigadier. We all stood around and looked him over: Sergeant Quintin George Murray Smythe, the farmer boy, twenty-six years of age, who was about to receive something that none of the generals present had or ever would have, in all probability.

He was just a solid little sergeant with a full, tanned face and some teeth knocked out, rather backward, but with the confidence of a soldier that, if he stood at attention, saluted, and only spoke when spoken to, he would be all right.

He didn't need to worry. This afternoon he was a bigger man than all the generals present and they didn't begrudge it him a bit.

Before he came General Dan Pienaar, commanding officer of the South African division in the field here, and the boy's brigadier stepped from the headquarters trailer and told us with tears in their eyes how moved they were that this honor had come to their commands.

"And how are you going to break it to him, sir?" asked one of the South Africans.

"I will take him into the caravan with his brigadier," said the general ("caravan" is the English word for "trailer"), "and I will tell him that the highest possible award—the Victoria Cross—is his."

"And exactly what is the Victoria Cross?" the general was asked.

"The Victoria Cross," he said, "is our only decoration which is made of base metal. It is the only medal which has not the slightest intrinsic value. Its only value is that it is the Victoria Cross."

There have been a lot of heroes in this war. On all the fronts in the past three years the valor and courage that have been displayed surpass all comprehension.

But there have been only thirty-three men before Sergeant Smythe who have been touched with the glory of the Victoria Cross. It comes only rarely, and when it comes it carries the full measure of supreme honor.

When the sergeant had laid down his gun and reported to his brigadier he was invited into the trailer. He and the general and the brigadier disappeared for perhaps five minutes.

They came out, not saying anything to one another. The sergeant looked stunned. He was lined up for pictures and suddenly seemed to pull himself together and realize what had happened.

There was no false modesty about the way he stood for his picture as a Victoria Cross hero. He put his chin out and let them shoot until they were tired.

"How did he take it?" we asked the general.

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"He was stone silent," said General Pienaar.

After the shooting was over we asked the sergeant if he was married.

"I haven't even a girl," he said, "much to the general's disgust. He wanted to write her a letter. But I haven't any girl."

When we were through all the generals and brigadiers and colonels present led the Victoria Cross up the hill to the mess to have a drink with him.

He was going to have to get used to a lot of toasts and flattery.

"We aren't letting him know," the general had said, "but he's going to be put into wool for a while. We aren't going to have him shot up until he can get home to his mother."

You have no conception of what it means to an army to have one of its soldiers awarded the Victoria Cross.

When we returned to mess and brought the news all the hoarded liquor in the place was broken out.

"And just what did he do?" asked a colonel.

"These citations are such understatements," said the captain who had the citation in his pocket. "They don't tell the story at all. But here it is:

" 'The award is for conspicuous gallantry in action in Alem Hamza area June 5,1942. During attack on enemy strong point in which his officer was severely wounded, Smythe took command of his platoon although himself suffering from shrapnel wound in forehead.

" 'Strong point having been overrun, our troops came under enfilade fire from enemy machine-gun nests. Realizing threat to his position, Smythe stalked and destroyed the crew of machine-gun nest with hand grenades and bayonet. Although weak from loss of blood, he continued to lead the advance and on encountering an anti-tank-gun emplacement again he attacked and singlehanded killed or captured the crew. He was directly responsible for killing of the enemy, shooting some, and bayoneting others as they withdrew.

" 'When he received the order to withdraw, he conducted the maneuver successfully and, although fainting from loss of blood, covered the rear himself.' "

For which he got the V.C.

Apart from this visit to the front, my knowledge of South Africans is mostly hearsay, but there was certainly a lot of hearsay. In those days when the Mediterranean was closed, ships had to go around

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the Cape of Good Hope, putting in at either Cape Town or Durban.

Everybody, it seemed, who went ashore at either place became a convert and began to talk of living in South Africa after the war. They said the climate was wonderful, the cities modern, and the people hospitable. And what they said about the girls at Durban would make the girls in America bite their lips to make them red.

The girls at Durban, said even the Americans, have the reddest lips, the bluest eyes, the pinkest cheeks, and the nicest smiles. They have curves just like the ads, and when the war is over, said the Americans, they are going to marry a girl from Durban and take her home, if they decide to go home at all.

That's what everyone said. The girls from Durban are famous. Where have they been all these years?

Probably the freakiest thing about the South Africans is their twin languages. The ones of English descent speak English as their first language and Afrikaans as their second. The ones of Dutch, French, German, and other descents speak Afrikaans as their first language and English as their second. Afrikaans, the first language of the Afrikander, is, I think, most like Dutch, probably, with dashes of other tongues and a great individuality of its own.

To the naked eye it is impossible for an American to tell a South African of English descent from a South African of Dutch descent. They look alike, but there is some sort of mysterious difference which has great importance. When I get to South Africa—and I'm going there someday—I will search out the hidden meaning.

CHAPTER VII

Before the Battle

THE COLONEL afterwards insisted that with lures and wiles and sorcery I mesmerized the New Zealand Public Relations into taking me to the front illegally. "You knew you were doing wrong, Treanor," he said. No such thing. Everything was done aboveboard through Merv Elias, the New Zealand motion picture cameraman. Merv had previously received permission to take up Landry, of *Life*, who was equally unaccredited, and eleven pages of Landry's pictures had subsequently been published. No secrecy about it.

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Merv arranged for me to go with the New Zealanders on a similar basis. Naturally, I said nothing about this to the colonel, since I already knew he wouldn't give me the sweat off his brow. As I told him later, I didn't consult him or ask his permission because my object was to get to the front, not to not get to the front. He tried to play this up as a confession of guilt but there was no guilt whatever. Merv and I were blameless. We were two woolly lambs.

Merv picked me up at Shepheard's on a brilliant October morning, a week before the Eighth Army launched its attack on El Alamein. He was tired and distracted and said he had lost his hat the night before in the bar. I was nervous to get off before something interfered, but Merv insisted on finding the hat and spinning a long yarn about an odd sawed-off character with whom he had been having some whiskies when he last saw the hat.

"He stood about five foot three," said Merv, "but he didn't look small because he was so powerful. If you took a rock and bashed a couple of eyes in it, you'd have his face, into which was stuck a black pipe. He wore white trousers, a long black coat and a black hat like Anthony Eden's which he never took off."

According to Merv, this character approached the bar in a dignified and resolute manner and spoke in a voice that could be heard in tempest: "Make it a beer."

It wasn't a rude voice. It was the kind of voice that would necessarily go with a human barrel. He lifted his glass to himself in the mirror, according to Merv, and drank himself a bottoms-up toast.

"Make it a beer," he thundered again.

Merv took a stroll alongside to get a better look and the sawed-off dynamo turned on him, exposing some jagged, tobacco-stained teeth.

"Can I shout you a drink, son?" he roared.

Anyone can shout a New Zealander a drink any time of the day. Merv reckoned he'd have a gentle whisky and the sawed-off gent shattered the cool tranquillity of Shepheard's bar with "Make it a whisky."

Then he told Merv (and the rest of the bar for that matter) his story. For thirty years he had been shipping out all over the world, and for all thirty years he had nursed an ambition to have a drink in the Shepheard's bar. Not once in thirty years, however, had a ship of his touched Egypt until the day before, when he had put in at Suez. So here he was at last in the Shepheard's bar, which is not so wonderful as to be worth thirty years of anticipation, but on the other hand it's not bad.

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In these war times it's fairly colorful with uniforms of historic regiments, and until Rommel was knocked out of Africa it was redolent of desert talk. Military secrecy never benefited by the Shepheard's bar but for the morale it did a great deal. One of the greatest sights in Egypt was watching an officer come directly in from the desert, brick-red from the sun, in sun-faded uniform, his hair stiff with sand, and call for a beer. The curious expression that would live on his face while he handled the cool glass before raising it to his lips was worth a Picture of the Week in *Life Magazine*. I don't know why Landry never got it. The Shepheard's bar is all right. It has that cool feel and musty smell of an old dignified bar made of heavy, polished dark woods—a look and smell that the chromium and red leather cocktail lounges will never achieve. Many a hat has been lost there besides Merv Elias'.

Merv had no conclusion to his story about the sailorman. The last he remembered, the fellow was in a thundering conversation, right in his element, talking first to a Scotchman in kilts on his left, and then to a pukka hussar in cherry-red pants on his right. Some time after that Merv lost his hat.

We eventually found the hat in a heap of lost hats that Shepheard's maintains behind the desk. Anyone can shuffle through this pile until he finds his lost hat. It's honor system. The clerk never asks any questions unless you start trying on hats to find one that fits you.

By this time the noon drinking period had rolled around and we had a gentle whisky or two to get Merv back into shape and then we climbed into the back of our truck, spread our sleeping bags on the floor, and dropped off into a siesta, rolling past the Sphinx, the Pyramids, and finally onto the desert road which leads to the Mediterranean and then up to El Alamein.

The next five days we lived in the New Zealand Public Relations camp just east of El Alamein, camped on a ridge beside the busy coast road, which runs through a narrow valley, barren as a salt flat.

Such gorgeous autumn days you have never known. Each budded like a flower. There is literally nothing like the delicacy of a desert morning in the midst of war's violence when the sun rises with startling rapidity, touching one rocky hillock after another with fragile pink . . . and suddenly the light reaches the Mediterranean, which goes instantaneously from dull slate to pale blue of purest luminosity. It's breath-taking. Giving a touch of futuristic movement to the scene, the soldiers going to breakfast threw fantastically

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long skinny shadows, which rippled across the rocky pink ground like purple streamers in a wind.

When I'm a poet, I shall write a sonnet about a desert morning before the Battle of El Alamein, and it will be a classic for memorizing in schools hundreds of years from now.

On the east road just below our ridge the early parade would be thumping along—tank carriers with their deep constant rumbling that comes from tons and tons of jouncing metal; throaty ammunition trucks; Bren guns on caterpillar tracks; station wagons with staff flags flying; quads dragging field guns; jeeps scurrying insolently in and out; motorcycles sputtering and monstrous gasoline trucks mumbling to themselves.

There were so many wonderful sounds. When I write my sonnet it will be sung with effects.

From away down the road toward Alex would come a thumping, half lost in the boundless horizons. That would be the Bofors opening on an early Jerry reconnaissance plane. As the guns jarred, high in the blue we would see cottony puffs forming pretty patterns where a camera pilot was ducking around between a sweat and a shiver.

And then there would be another sound from out of the east, a steady thrumming, and the fighters would swing directly overhead, playing in the sky like puppies, in loose formations, with the morning sun glinting on their wings. They'd be gone, the first fighter sweep of the day, and a deeper thrumming would come from a different quarter and twenty-four medium bombers in tight formation with fighters roaming above would move resolutely across the sky, clothed in the music of their motors.

Cookie, bending over his fire, would look up with satisfaction. I remember him saying one morning:

"Ahhhh, the bombers are playing well and truly in this show. There's some Jerries across the line that are going to catch the —— in a few minutes."

And Skee, the driver, answered him. "Laugh, will ya? Maybe there's some Jerries across the line that are looking into the sky this very minute at some Heinkels coming this way and they're laughin' too and saying: 'There's some —— Kiwis that are goin' to catch the —— in a few minutes.' "

"Ahhhh, yes," said Cookie sadly. "It'd be a good war but for the —— bombers. We could lay back and read and talk and play cards and never a care but for them bomber bastards."

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Before we finished breakfast the thrumming would begin anew, and in the far sky at the tip of a cloud the bombers would come into view on the return trip, moving steadily and resolutely back.

"Are they all there?" Cookie would ask, looking over his shoulder from the frying pan.

"Six, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four," Skee would say.

"All there," Cookie would say. "Somebody got the ——."

It wouldn't be quite eight o'clock yet, but somebody had already gotten the ——. I'll write a sonnet.

On the final night before the battle, as soon as darkness brought protection from reconnaissance planes, the entire Army came to life and made the last great secret move forward. There was no doubt in anyone's mind now. The battle would start the next night shortly after the moon came up.

It took us ten minutes to find an opening in the unbroken line which moved up the coast road by starts and jerks like the traffic to a Rose Bowl football game. And then we were really on the way in the soft dark with the Mediterranean murmuring to our right and the air full of engine sounds.

One little item, more than anything else, convinced me this was to be the battle for keeps and not a mere tactical maneuver. For a while we got tangled up with a huge convoy of trucks loaded with water pipes. The miles and miles of clanging pipes that were jouncing ahead of us and behind us had one sole purpose—to extend our water line after we had driven so deep into Jerry territory that we could no longer be served by truck.

"It's going to be a bloody bash," said Chris, our Maori orderly.

From time to time the monotonous transport noises were broken by a sharp and nervous slamming as machine gunners stationed along the way to protect the road from strafers cleared their guns with short bursts to test the working parts. Sometimes close at hand, sometimes distant, these sudden quick bursts seemed full of portent.

After an hour and a half we had edged along ten miles and came to a crossing where a convoy was waiting for our arrival. The moon was just coming up like a pumpkin, and as we got out for a cigarette the desert was full of the dark shadows of vehicles, creeping in dust clouds of their own making along dozens of broad tracks which crisscrossed the open desert.

We moved faster in the open, playing follow-the-leader in the mysterious confusion, everyone lost except the driver of the first truck, and perhaps he was lost too.

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How they get around in the desert is a mystery anyway. An army stretches over millions of acres, every acre just like the acre next to it. On this blank expanse hundreds of thousands of men are supposed to shift like a kaleidoscope, each part finding its proper place in the new pattern.

In another hour we reached an empty ten-acre tract which was just like every other ten-acre tract within a hundred-mile radius. We judged it to be our site and our convoy scattered its trucks until they were as far apart as possible. It had gotten colder, and with the moon now high in the heavens like a silver dollar and that feel of a winter snap in the air, it was much easier to lie awake and wonder what the battle would bring than it was to sleep and dream of home.

Twenty-two hours later I was standing on the start line with only a matter of sixty minutes to go.

CHAPTER VIII

El Alamein

A FLICKERING BREEZE was blowing the last shreds of clouds from the face of the full moon. The white radiance drenched the desert and the stars seemed to hang in clusters.

"—," said the sergeant. "It would be bright. I'd just as soon we had a bit of cloud. Still a man's hard to see at a couple of hundred yards."

He held his watch to the moon and said:

"A little less than an hour now. Well, I don't mind the wait so long as he doesn't start to shell. That's the only time I get nervous. When they start shelling I can't get off my ass."

He was sitting in a slit trench, propped at the end with his arms folded around his knees. It was about a quarter to nine, and in three quarters of an hour the long line of troops, uncertain blotches in the moonlight, would move past the start line toward the Jerry defenses.

"We collected a prisoner a little while ago," he said, "and he told us that Jerry is ready to counterattack. Hell, he couldn't be. Still I don't know. He's a shrewd bastard."

At the other end of the trench another New Zealander broke in:

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"If we can pull this one off it will give the —— Russians a lift. It would be just what they need to give that last bit. I hope we give 'em a bloody bash for the Russians."

From a cluster of shadows a hundred feet away a shot sounded as a gun went off by mistake.

"The bloody mad bastard!" said the sergeant. "Well."

He was grinning a little, and the moonlight glistened on his teeth. Even in that silvery light his face appeared tanned to that deep brown tan, almost without color, that comes of being in the desert sun for months on end. He looked like an educated man, an officer, rather than an enlisted man. His helmet was thrown on the back of his head, giving him a devil-dog air as he looked up grinning. It was surprising to hear him say:

"This is a young man's game. Some of us are too old for this fellow Maxie, but it's surprising what we can do. I'm forty, but ever since I've been out here I've been disgustingly fit. I've never felt better, actually, than I do tonight. We've been hunched in these trenches all day, too, with a cover pulled over our heads so he wouldn't see us, but still I feel like I'd just had a good rest."

While he was talking the whole moonlit desert behind the start line was filled with the slow confused sounds of an army moving into final position for the attack. Along a track fifty yards west the big tanks were clanking slowly forward with the turrets flung open and the commanders standing in black silhouette on the horizon. Their fluttering signal pennants, the colors lost in the moonlight, gave them a touch of gaiety and gallantry.

Little Bren-gun carriers scurried about finding their places, and soldiers with bayonets idled forward to the start line, which was marked across the desert for miles and miles by tiny shielded blue kerosene lamps and a white tape.

The engineers, the sappers, were already forward, laden with their Bangalore torpedoes for blowing the wire, their shovels for digging the mines, the mine locators and their fuses.

The Maoris, the New Zealand bayonet boys, stood just behind in later waves, assigned to do the mop-up work on stubborn machine-gun nests. They were all standing ready now behind that tape and blue lights. It was like the moment before the kickoff, the beginning of the Oklahoma land rush, and an over-the-top zero hour all rolled into one.

The lighting effects were astonishing. Across the desert at right angles to the start line ran long perspectives of kerosene lamps,

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standing on posts and shielded except from the rear. Laid out by the Military Police, these avenues led nearly two miles to points on the Jerry wire and mine fields where the engineers were going to clear gaps. Without these indicators the tremendous traffic that would roll forward, the greatest in desert history, would have become hopelessly entangled on the flat, barren plain.

It seemed incredible that all these lights could have been set up without Jerry knowing. Apparently they had been. He hadn't made a move.

The sergeant in the slit trench held his watch to the moon again and said: "Fifteen minutes to go."

He pulled himself out and began filling the pockets of his web equipment with ammunition for his tommy gun.

"That's one thing you Yanks could do," he said. "Invent some kind of light ammo for a tommy gun."

He shrugged into his kit, pulled his tin hat low on his forehead, and looked up and down the line.

"The Souths Afs are down there," he said. "They're so bloody keen for this show that even the cooks are going in with bayonets. They're the Transvaal Scottish. The only bloody thing is going to be to keep up with the bastards. They're keen as hell."

I asked him if he felt nervous now that the moment was at hand—having in mind what the brigadier had told me an hour earlier: that he'd consider himself lucky if he got off this first night with only one third casualties, one boy in three gone.

"Nothing like nervous," he said. "It's not like being on the bloody defensive and getting shelled. I hate to think what those poor buggers over there are going to get in a few minutes when our artillery lets loose. Even though they are Jerries and Eyetyes. It's going to be bloody awful. I think they'll be too badly shaken by the time we get there to make much of a fight. I think we might have an easy time tonight."

"Are you married?" I asked for no particular reason.

"Oh yes," he said, "and I've a daughter married. At least, she should be. She wrote me in January she was marrying. I haven't heard since. My regiment's changed and my mail must have been lost. Well, good-by. All the best."

"All the best," I said to him.

I got up to get my tin hat, which I'd left in the jeep. The brigadier had told me I could walk the first fifteen minutes with them.

My watch was five minutes slow.

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I was at the jeep getting my tin hat when the first wave of New Zealanders, bayonets fixed, moved without shouted command across the white tape and beyond the blue lights of the start line.

They went on the tick of synchronized watches in the quick and nerve-tingling fast walk of the attack, moving with startling rapidity and no sound across the flat moonlit plain.

The unexpected start defeated my plan of hearing the last quiet words in the last restless seconds when the bottom seems to fall out of men's stomachs. It was probably no more than "Ready, chaps?"

Grabbing the helmet, I beat it after them, crossing the start line midway between the first and second waves.

A soldier looked at me questioningly as I panted alongside of him as if to say, "Where's your gun, dig?"

"I'm a newspaperman," I said.

"All right," he told me. "You'll see something."

They pressed on at their rapid walk, too far apart to talk among themselves. The desert ahead seemed white and silent and lonely. It was something less than two miles to the German wire and mine fields—less than half an hour's walk.

I planned to go the first fifteen minutes. We went along without speaking for about three minutes, when the soldier turned his head and said:

"We'll take care of you."

It suddenly came upon me that he expected I was going all the way in. This was the first I had thought about the process of returning to brigade headquarters and leaving the soldiers to fight the battle. It was an awkward thought.

"Thanks," I said to his offer to take care of me.

The horizon, in a great semicircle behind us, turned a flickering red and the lights danced eerily across the desert, coming and going silently.

It was an awesome moment, and then the sound caught up with us and broke like I don't know what kind of unearthly racket on our backs.

With it came quick gusts of concussion. In the midst of the whonging and thumping and thundering we heard the hissing whistle of shells.

The greatest barrage in the history of the desert, and one of the greatest concentrated barrages since the Battle of the Somme, had opened to protect our advance.

In fifteen or twenty seconds the shells would come plunking

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into the midst of the startled Jerries and Eyetyes, sending them in quick dives to the slit trenches.

We pressed on in an absolutely terrifying thunder, and I'm frank to say I was shaken. It put the fear of God into me. I'd never heard more than an isolated gun go off before. But the soldier at my side turned his head and said with a grin that looked weird in the flickering red light:

"That's what I like to hear. They can't send him too much. He asked for it, the bahrstahrd."

It seemed as though such a hideous racket couldn't go on. It seemed as though it would have to wear itself out.

But with a sort of wicked rise and fall, as the guns slid in and out of synchronization, the barrage roared on and on, non-stop, accompanied by the frightening little winds of concussion.

I didn't have any gun or any grenades or any business there, for that matter, and it would be a lie to say I wasn't wishing for that fifteen minutes to be up. Do you know how long fifteen minutes is? It's eternity.

I looked at my watch and had a hard time reading it, but finally made out that ten minutes had passed.

I just didn't have the nerve to tell the soldier who had promised to take care of me that I was dropping out. I slid along the line as though I were going to ask a question of the next man, and then I went to the next man and finally got out of sight.

Then I began to lag and to wonder if our own men would bayonet me for slowing down. There was just nothing I could think of to say if I were challenged. I couldn't say: "I just let my life insurance lapse."

I couldn't say: "Well, I'm a newspaperman."

I couldn't say: "It's late for me to be out."

You try to think of something to say. It isn't in Emily Post.

At the stroke of fifteen minutes I turned back, still trying to find the answer. The second line, a grim, fast-walking line, let me through, and I don't think it even saw me.

In the moonlight, moving with that determined, intimidating quickstep, bayoneted guns pointing ahead, they seemed to be in a deadly trance.

Moving as nonchalantly as possible with my hands in my great-coat pockets, I passed two or more lines and came to the Maoris, the bayonet cleanup men. They swept on, too, silently, intent on the

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work ahead, and I realized I could be out chasing butterflies with a net and nobody would notice me.

There were other matters pending.

Ahead, clear around our half of the horizon, the guns flared and died, flared and died, endlessly, pounding the air with their heavy thunder, and each shot making a red hemisphere like a setting sun.

The smell of burning cordite was blowing our way, mingling with the sharp smell of dust stirred up by the tanks and trucks, the gun carriers, jeeps, and other vehicles that were crowding forward to the start line waiting for the signal to rush forward.

In the other direction the engineers by now must be working the Bangalore torpedoes on the German wire. The infantry would be crowding in, waiting for the explosions to clear a gap. Then they would be pushing ahead, treading lightly across the live mines to avoid setting them off.

They would be watching for booby traps, wires strung between two bushes, which when tripped by a New Zealand foot would set off an anti-personnel mine.

And then when they were through they would move on, still at that restless, terrifying quickstep, going against Jerry's machine-gun posts and anti-tank emplacements so that the tanks could come through later without being knocked off like ducks.

And behind them the engineers, with their mine-detecting apparatus, their picks and shovels and explosives, would be clearing a gap in the field toward which the tanks would pass.

I looked toward the German lines and the flares were going up, the Very lights, a gorgeous fireworks, silent in contrast to the wild thunder of the guns on our horizon. And then I heard, faint and far away, between the heaviest detonations of the barrage, the cold, merciless, faraway chatter of machine guns.

The New Zealand boys I had gone out with were beginning to die and were beginning to kill. The battle was on.

At brigade headquarters, a trailer a few yards behind the start line, I sat with Bruce Hewitt, the New Zealand Public Relations man, and waited for the success signal, a chandelier of three lights which would float down from a parachute.

There were thousands of lights above the Jerry line: red and green Verys burning low above the ground; parachute flares dropped from planes and hanging almost motionless; the four-colored gorgeous streams of tracers from the Spandaus spouting at our planes;

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the sparkling bursts of the ack-ack; and the grim flashes of the shell explosions.

The pounding of the guns beat me into a sort of fatigue. After an hour, propped up against a wheel of the trailer, I dozed off. Bruce woke me to look at a prisoner, the first.

The prisoner had a bad arm. He held it across his chest as though it were broken. He swayed a little as though he might faint.

He was a Hun, one of the first two brought in, a corporal.

"Badly shocked," said a major.

Well he might have been. Even on the sending end that infernal barrage was enough to shock us with its concussions. It was battering our ears until our heads rang dizzily.

On the receiving end it must have been dreadful.

The major examined the arm. It didn't seem broken, and there was no bullet hole in his coat. Thinking he might have put on the coat over a wound, he asked the Hun:

"Bullet? Bullet? Bullet?"

The man looked at him glassily without answering.

"Bullet?" repeated the major. "Bullet?"

The second Hun, a determined, sharp-looking little fellow, stepped over and said: "Nix, nix."

"It must be sprained," said the major, and he made a sort of sling for it out of a tan army handkerchief. "He was probably knocked down by an explosion. He's badly shocked."

The little Hun, who seemed to be in good enough shape, sat down and waited.

But the corporal remained on his feet. He never seemed to see us. Once in a while he turned his head without moving his body and looked back where our guns were raging along the whole horizon. He would stare for a long time with the sort of faraway look in his eyes that a race horse has when it looks over the heads of the men gathered around its stall.

Then he would turn his head again and look for a long time back to the German lines where the shells were exploding—where he had been until a very few minutes before when he was picked up by our advancing troops.

I expected him to shake his head like a groggy prize fighter taking the count.

But he would only stare motionlessly before turning his head back in the other direction where our guns were sending over more and more and still more explosives.

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A Maori brought them in through the moonlight and turned them over to an officer at brigade headquarters.

It seemed to me that there should have been some excitement about it, but the Maori simply said:

"A couple of Jerries."

The officer looked them over and asked some questions, but the prisoners refused to give any information.

They were dirty and worn-looking. They had probably been in the desert without a bath for many weeks.

Their uniforms were baggy and stained. On their heads they wore the German desert cap with a long visor, a cap which looks very much like the cap a locomotive engineer wears.

They probably hadn't had time to get their helmets after the barrage started.

As formidable specimens they were disappointing, which isn't meant, however, to give the impression that they weren't good soldiers. Nobody kidded himself about that.

From time to time other prisoners came straggling in, all Germans in this sector.

Their arrival was always undramatic. There were usually a dozen or so marching in uneven double file with a Maori trailing behind. The Maori was easily distinguishable even at a distance because he carried the rifle and the prisoners were unarmed.

The Maori would report, turn them in, and they would flop down on the ground, sitting or lying and talking in low tones among themselves.

After a few minutes they would be marched off by another guard, or, if there was a truck available, they would be loaded aboard and taken to the rear.

They looked glum and depressed and didn't show any fear of being mistreated.

They fascinated me. Only a few minutes before they had been in the middle of it. Suddenly, alive and whole, they were out of it, but on the other side, protected by the conventions of war. It was mysterious to see them, sitting there so quietly, talking a little, and picking up pebbles in the moonlight.

And after studying them for minutes at a time they were just as mysterious as ever. Except that they were for the most part smaller men than I had expected, I had no clearer impression of what the enemy is like than before they were brought in.

All this time the barrage rolled on and on, endlessly crashing into

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our ears with a stunning weight of sound. During the occasional split-second intervals when the mad booming fell off we could still hear the faint cold-blooded pounding of the machine guns out there in the lines.

Jerry hadn't been moved yet. He was fighting stubbornly and shrewdly tonight. The night's objectives—two ridges which had to be cleared of gun posts before the tanks could be risked—were still in dispute.

Across the start line a never-ceasing column of Bren-gun carriers and mortars was winding slowly into the empty desert. But the bulk of the tanks hadn't gone out.

In a long line, as far as we could see in the moonlight, they stretched to the rear, with their crews lolling on the roofs and against their sides.

I walked over to one and said to the gunner: "When do you think you'll be going?"

"Ahhh, Christ, we'll soon be flying," he said. "We've got to get in there if we're to pull this off."

He was a Tommy, a rough, towheaded, stocky fellow with a bony exaggerated face like a comic-section character.

"Well, what do you think of it, choom?" he said. (To hear a Tommy pronounce the word "chum" is an experience in itself.)

"There's a lot going on out there."

"That's it," he said.

The tank commander from upstairs gave the order to start the tank.

"That'll be it," said the Tommy. "All the best, choom."

In a few seconds the tanks lurched forward with their little signal pennants flying bravely and the gunners and loaders still sitting on top. The dust, already powdered by hundreds of vehicles, rose in suffocating clouds.

They clanked past for ten minutes in their own dust clouds with the men silhouetted on top, above the thickest billows.

The success signal came about ten minutes later.

Meanwhile the line of vehicles never stopped pouring forward, stopping a few minutes for a congestion and then grinding forward as much as ten minutes at a stretch. Even through the hammering of the artillery barrage we could hear from time to time the beating hum of dozens and scores and hundreds of powerful engines.

Trucks by the convoy rolled rapidly across. It was the greatest

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movement of heavy traffic in the desert war, and it was going off with beautiful synchronization.

Another line of tanks came by, and I had an idea I'd ride out with them.

They pushed ahead slowly, and I ran alongside and shouted at the men on top. They reached down and gave me a hand, lifting me aboard. I told them I was a newspaperman.

"We'll ask the commander," said a loader.

The commander turned a face covered with dust powder like a clown's and stared at me in what appeared to be disbelief.

"I can't permit this," he said, and put me off.

I was a couple of hundred yards down the avenue by this time, and the tank column was moving rapidly past. I flagged one after another, trying to hitch a ride, but they gave no heed.

Then a little Bren-gun carrier came lurching along, throwing dust over its bows like a motorboat in a heavy sea.

The commander pulled it to a halt in its nimble tracks and let me aboard. He looked briefly at my papers and even compared the photograph with my face.

Off we barged again, clipping off to the right and passing several other Brens to get in our proper position in the line.

The road was already littered with trucks stuck in the dusty sand or broken down. We crept cautiously around them and then back, following the snaky traffic line.

On both sides, visible against the horizon, a hundred or so yards from us, stood long motionless lines of trucks, looking like covered wagons. They had gone out earlier, independently, and were waiting their turn to join the traffic and pass through the mine-field gap. Everything that went through the gap went on a priority basis.

From time to time we stopped as the traffic became tied up. Then we would be off again with our signal pennants fluttering in the breeze. The dust was gagging. The driver and the commander wore gauze masks over their mouths and goggles over their eyes.

In the back of the carrier lay a gunner, sprawled out, dead asleep with his mouth wide open and the dust funneling down his throat.

"How does he do it?" I asked the commander.

"Some of them can," he said. "He's had a few spins and he's not worried. I'll have to be waking him soon, though."

He shouted and the man looked up, startled.

"We'll be cracking soon," the commander said.

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The man grinned and I said: "How can you sleep at a time like this?"

"You'd better sleep while you can," he said; "we'll get little sleep during the next few days."

On the far end of the avenue, after we had passed the mines, I touched the commander on the shoulder and pointed to a huddled shadow just off the road.

"First you've seen?" he asked.

"Yes."

"There'll be plenty more."

We couldn't see whether it was a New Zealander or a Jerry.

We dragged along, starting and stopping, for some distance. Then the machine-gun fire sounded very distinctly, hammering menacingly a few hundred yards ahead.

"As soon as we see a bunch of chaps you'd better get off," said the commander. "We'll be in it soon."

"Come and see the fun," said the gunner in the rear.

"I've got to hurry back and write this story in time for the morning paper," I said.

That was a good one. That was a beauty.

They dropped me off in the midst of some Maoris who were standing by the side of the road, leaning on their guns.

One Maori handed me a damp, bloodstained packet, the papers of a soldier, and said:

"Please hand them this at headquarters. You can tell them he was quite dead. I felt him. He was cold,"

Hours later the barrage had stopped and a sort of disordered peace blessed the desert. I found Bruce and we drove to the beach for a swim and then I slept on a sand dune.

In the late afternoon we returned to brigade headquarters. I wanted to go forward again and asked a captain with a jeep if he would give me a lift. The front was then four or five miles ahead. To put him in a good mood I gave him a couple of good pulls from a bottle of issue rum.

The effect was terrific. He'd had no sleep since the attack began and his nerves must have been on edge. The rum threw him completely. Perhaps he'd had a couple of earlier drinks. Anyway, he laid the windshield of the jeep flat and drove like an absolute madman along the rutted track which led into the setting sun. He seemed to get drunker and drunker, and once when we stopped for

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directions a private refused information even when the captain pulled his rank. I didn't want any trouble myself as Public Relations might take a dim view of my giving rum for rides to the front. They might have thought I deliberately liquored the man. So I urged him to leave off the argument and get on with the driving. I didn't care where we were going, anyway. Off we whipped in a fury.

At times the dust came over our hood and into our faces, not like a cloud, but like a waterfall—a heavy stream.

I thought he couldn't see where he was going when he was driving like this and became convinced when we hit a truck, sprawling me across the hood and throwing him against the steering gear, which gave him a punch below the belt. The truck paid us no heed except that a fellow leaned out and called us a couple of ——.

After this the captain weakened. We crawled and I had a chance to look about at this road to the front, which was a tract across the desert, twice as wide as Wilshire Boulevard.

The dust, which had been ground into a talc lighter than volcanic ash, hung in the air like a mist, thin in places and billowing where a tank or a truck had just gone past.

Everywhere half visible in the haze, without regard to left- and right-hand side of the road, trucks, Bren carriers, tanks, tank carriers, and jeeps were rocking along in the ruts, throwing spray and wakes like mad ships on a crazy river.

In twenty minutes we reached a hollow, perhaps a mile long, and running parallel to the front. On the far side of the rise, just below the brim, crouched a long line of tanks, set close together, and barking from time to time like mastiffs as they uncorked 75-mm. shells at Jerry, a sort of thick woof-woofing sound.

On the floor of the hollow lay the 26th Battalion, New Zealanders, crouching in slit trenches and catching the shells that Jerry was tossing back at the tanks.

Dust spouts marked the hits, and on the extreme right a truck burning in a thick cloud of black smoke marked a kill.

Transport of all kinds was moving across the field, bringing up supplies to the troops who had taken this objective.

Other trucks and vehicles were parked at irregular intervals, dispersed against bomb attack.

The captain took me to a lieutenant and the lieutenant took me to a sergeant, who was detailed the job of advising me where I could best creep forward and look out at the Jerry lines.

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While we were talking a shell screamed above us, the first I had heard at close quarters, and it didn't take me any time at all to know what that scream meant. I beat the sergeant into his slit trench and heard the shell explode behind. Immediately after another one smoked over and landed directly behind us, and the sergeant, whose hips were stuck above the trench, yelled:

"I'm hit in the ass."

I felt terrible; if I hadn't been there he would never have been hit. We lay there about half a minute and nothing happened so we struggled up to look over the sergeant's damage.

He showed me where he was hit and I couldn't see anything. Then he decided it was only a rock, until a soldier in a neighboring slit trench shouted:

"Look at your dust screen."

The screen, a sheet hung in front of the slit trench against the wind, was peppered with five tiny fragmentation holes from the shell.

The sergeant then reverted to his original contention that he had been hit by shrapnel and offered the preposterous theory that the fragment was spinning on the flat when it hit him and had caromed off without penetration.

It took three lines of notes on this theory to satisfy him.

He directed me to a tank where the crew was brewing tea over a primus and said that just beyond them I could get a look at the Jerry lines.

The tank men, who looked like clowns in their desert masks, grinned hospitably and gave me tea, while they told me their battle experiences of the night before.

Not one line of their experiences can I remember. This teatime period is almost a complete blank. It didn't register in the general excitement.

As the best spot to see Jerry lines they pointed to an observation post, consisting of a Bren carrier, where some men with field glasses were staring out at the enemy.

The observers invited me up. In the setting sun the Jerry lines were difficult to see, but from time to time the silhouette of a truck would appear momentarily on a rise, and there were plumes of dust all up and down where transport was moving.

Immediately in front of us, scattered along the front as far as I could see, were enemy mine fields, which we had not yet penetrated, surrounded with barbed wire.

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The observers were directing their battery of 25-pounders, which were shooting from a rear position.

"Four shells coming, sir," said the sergeant who was on the field telephone.

The lieutenant began counting aloud for my benefit from one to thirty.

"At about thirty," he said, "you will see the bursts as the shells land out there."

About five seconds after the thirty the shells landed, throwing up smoke and dust.

"Did you hit whatever you were shooting at?" I asked.

"We aren't shooting at a special target," he said. "It's an area where troops are lying in slit trenches. If you want to see shots at a target watch that gun over there."

He pointed to a Jerry gun about a thousand yards from us, whose barrel was barely visible. Another battery was firing on it, and from time to time we would see a succession of shells landing on the hill beneath it. It was cleverly placed, however, so that shells with a flat trajectory would slide just overhead. It would have taken a lot to get it.

"Aren't we in danger here from machine-gun fire?" I asked.

"No," he said, "all the machine guns have been cleaned out. That gun there is the only one left. It's not a machine gun."

Our infantry had been out there the night before, bayoneting and grenading the emplacements, and then had withdrawn behind the circle of tanks which served as a temporary artillery wall until the attack was resumed.

The sun was setting rapidly, and when the light became too dim for observing the position of our bursts the Bren carrier withdrew and I went back to the sergeant, who offered me a blanket and some biscuits and the shelter of a slit trench which belonged to a soldier who had been assigned to take a batch of prisoners to the rear.

As evening came on the fireworks slowly increased in visibility.

This was no war of invisible bullets. Except for the rifles, nearly all the guns shot shells with glowing tracers attached. You could follow them as easily as the spinning fireballs from Roman candles. When the guns really got going the air looked like one of those crisscrossed time exposures of the heavens, showing the paths of the stars.

The Jerry gunfire especially would take your breath away.

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Jerry's weak in the head for color tracers—red, blue, green, and yellow.

Our first spectacular fireworks started after sunset, when a sweep of ME-109s crossed our lines.

The sky was a pale evening green, still light enough so we could distinguish the black silhouettes of the sharp, buzzing little planes, and dark enough so the fireworks showed up.

The nasty little ships came down the length of our lines from the direction of the South Africans, their progress marked by the whamming of ack-ack and the streaking lights, glitters and flashings of the tracers and exploding shells.

When they were half a mile from us the guns in our immediate neighborhood began walloping at them with fast hammerlike reports, and suddenly the whole countryside for hundreds of yards behind was blasting and glinting. The landscape flashed and the sky streamed with the glowing lines of bullets which converged like the outline of a tepee in the neighborhood of the little black, humming flecks. And then they were farther down the line and we could hear other guns take up the anvil chorus. In a few minutes it was all quiet again and we strolled among the slit trenches taking the balmy evening air.

During this pleasant interlude one of our tanks coughed up a shell. A Jerry 88-mm. gun, marking the flash, began skinning in some hot low ones, just clearing the crest of the rise.

They came screaming over, a glowing yellow, with all the power of a low home run that brings you up standing.

Clearing our hollow, they hit the rise on the far side and ricocheted for yards like a skipping stone. Golf balls, the New Zealanders call them.

They're very easy to follow. A shell has much less speed than you imagine.

After whistling a few of these low ones in and discovering that the tanks were just beneath the trajectory, Jerry gave up and we relaxed again, hoping that another tank wouldn't get some pugnacious idea about shooting up the enemy.

We might as well not have hoped it. Every time, just as we were relaxing, a tank would clear its throat of a shell and that 88 would start sending in those hot low ones. The shots didn't do us any harm, but they didn't make us feel any better, either.

One time the tanks opened up all the way along the line and bewildered the 88 completely. It didn't resume shelling for ten

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minutes. The tanks might have knocked some of the crew up a bit. While the 88 was firing at the tank flashes, the tanks were probably firing at the 88 flashes. In the slit trenches we had no way of knowing.

In a surprisingly short time the night became very black and everything went quiet.

Then the moon came out and so did the bombers. Again we in the slit trenches had no way of knowing who was who or what was what.

We'd hear a plane come moaning overhead and would wonder if it was ours or theirs. It was a pretty good indication if our ack-ack opened fire. Then we figured it was theirs.

But when the ack-ack didn't open fire we weren't too certain anyway. It might be a mistake.

On either side of us the bombs came down, crunch, crunch, crunch, a heavy, low, prolonged tearing sound.

But they didn't drop any bombs on us for a long time. Somebody else was taking the beating. Maybe it was the enemy, maybe it was our neighbors. We didn't know.

The moon kept climbing higher and higher and throwing out more and more light. It was just past the full, a little lopsided but glowing like a lantern.

About midnight we heard a plane come overhead and the ack-ack opened up. Then I heard the hissing whistle of falling bombs for the first time.

"Psss-ssswsss-ssswsss," they came down, the sound rising in pitch in a paralyzing way.

I had planned when we were bombed to lie on my back in the slit trench and look up to see what I could see. But I couldn't seem to do it. I went on my stomach and buried my hands and held tight. The bombs fell quite a way from us.

From time to time through the rest of the night they dropped bombs near us but never close enough so I could feel the wind of the explosion although I could always feel the concussion along the ground.

Our night fighters were up and we thought we could figure out a little how the battle was being fought.

All night long, after we had heard the ack-ack banging, we would soon hear a plane hooping over our heads. We thought this must be one of our night fighters trying to get there before the bombers turned home. We never knew anything for certain, though.

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Meanwhile, behind all this piccolo playing of the bombers and close-range guns, there was beating the heavy orchestra of our artillery, which for the second night in a row was giving Jerry the shellacking of his life. It went on and on and on like some intolerable rumbling in the heavens which you could hardly stand any longer. It wouldn't give us any rest at all. But still, despite it, I fell asleep in the early morning, huddled in the slit trench, and didn't wake until dawn, when the cannonading had ceased, and there was a fresh peaceful spirit in the air. I looked up and there were men all over the hollow gathered around little fires brewing tea.

CHAPTER IX

Expelled to India

AFTER THE FIRST few hours of El Alamein I had sort of cut myself loose from drab reality and was flying around the battlefield in a state of happy mental derangement. Four days later I ran down like a clock and was sitting in a stupor, propped against the wheel of a truck near 6th Division headquarters, when Arch Curry and Bill Brady of the New Zealand PRO spotted me.

"We've bad news," said Bill.

Bill didn't need to carry on. I was as good as on the way to India. I knew. I knew how the whole thing had come about. The censors —my good friends, the censors—had told on me when they received my accumulated stories. They'd reported that the Only Correspondent West of the Mississippi Ever to Visit the Middle East was illegally at the front.

I was flown back to Cairo in disgrace in an aged make of aircraft known as a Lysander, which goes about eighty miles an hour. We flew on the deck twenty feet off the ground, so no stray Messerschmitt could dive on us. This kept my mind off my troubles. I thought we were going to plow into every piece of high ground. But we made it and I dashed by taxi to the Public Relations.

"Colonel," I said to Colonel Astley when I was ushered into the presence, "Colonel, this is an outrage. There I was up at the front with the full knowledge of the New Zealand Public Relations when—"

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"Did you have a slip of paper from this office, entitling you to go forward?" said the colonel.

Ever since arriving in the Middle East I'd been studying the rules diligently, trying to find legal ways to do illegal things. For an amateur I had a pretty good grasp of the rules, but now I was up against the man who made the rules. It was a hairline case, though, and he didn't hand down a clean-cut decision. Instead he made a confidential recommendation to the Americans, who in turn made a confidential recommendation to Washington. This overjoyed me.

"It's lost in the shuffle," I told myself.

Then I wrote a column called "There Ain't No Holt That Can't Be Broke," which told about a fire-eater who came into our restaurant. Everybody wanted to see him but the manager always threw him out.

The fire-eater told himself, "There ain't no holt that can't be broke," and put on his act through the open window. He'd stuff a torch down his throat, swallow a gallon of flame and smoke, and then blow it into the restaurant. Then he'd holler, "Baksheesh!" at us and we'd throw him some coins because he was good.

Then I told about a dwarf who came into the restaurant, with his face painted like a clown. He bowed and did a backward flip and a waiter made a rush at him. The dwarf went into a series of flips forward but the waiter caught him by the legs when he was upside down and ran with him to the door. He threw him out.

The dwarf's manager was outside and threw him back in. The waiter threw him out. The manager threw him in.

"Leave him be," we hollered.

They left him be and we threw him some good baksheesh.

"There ain't no holt that can't be broke," I wrote in my column, figuring my case was lost in the red tape in Washington.

The day after this was printed the Los Angeles *Times* wired me that the War Department had requested my removal. That was one holt that wasn't broke.

Then I was on a plane heading for India. It seemed rather sudden. I didn't even know which side of India Bombay was on and which side Calcutta was on. Do you?

I landed at Karachi and flew to New Delhi and turned myself in to the Public Relations, where I was instantly accredited. Why not? The Public Relations chief in India was an ex-Los Angeles *Times* police reporter, Major Fred Eldridge. I hope he's a lieutenant colonel by now. I hope he's a colonel. I hope he's got wings.

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Then I was up in the Punjab on a specially conducted tour. And the next thing I was at Calcutta and then I was down in Burma at a battle. And then Bombay. And Hyderabad, Madras, Cochin, Travancore, Mysore, Poona, where Gandhi was fasting. It was a circus. I went everywhere I wanted. No troubles. Accredited to the British. Accredited to the Americans. Half fares on the trains.

I wouldn't know how to tell you about it all. Nobody can tell you all about India. Not even Herbert Matthews, who for my money is the best man who ever reported on India, just as for my money Teddy White is the best man who's reported on China. India's too much for any man to tell any other man about. It's the greatest subject in the world for writers. It has everything: tigers and elephants,

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saboteurs, world-shaking political problems, a war with the Japs, maharajahs, Communists, Gandhi, Untouchables, jewels such as even Barbara Hutton hasn't, famines, British sahibs, Moslems and Hindus, Sikhs and Parsis, gorgeous geography from the cocoanut forests of Travancore to the rarefied, breath-taking snow summits of Kashmir, etc., etc., etc., etc., until the mind is overburdened and the imagination staggers under the load.

There has never been a subject like India. There is only one trouble with it: you can find hardly any readers who give a damn. Readers would rather read about anything else. A century ago in England one of the great truths about India was uttered. Somebody summed it up picturesquely in these words:

"If you want to empty a hall, all you have to do is announce the next speaker will discuss India."

It's hard to explain unless you can believe that the average person has the idea that all the flashing and color of India are superficial and that the real story is not romance but drab and hopeless tragedy without even a climax. It's just misery going on and on as far as the mind can see. Serious contemplation of India can only produce despair.

Still a writer can't *not* write about India if he's been there. If only for his own satisfaction, he must tell what he *saw* in this queer ocean of humanity through the glass-bottomed boat of journalism.

So we'll begin with personalities, the first of them old man Savarkar, and then go on to Jinnah and some others.

Throw open the doors. Empty the hall. India's next.

CHAPTER X

A Mixed Bag of Indians

"WOULD YOU WISH that I should confess to you everything?" asked old man Savarkar, head of the Hindu Mahasabha.

I hadn't meant to ask the old man an awkward question. I thought it was a matter of record. I thought he'd been convicted and served his term. He'd already said they wanted to hang him but that he'd gotten out of it with a sentence of fifty years.

But that was for something else, apparently. It was to my question

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whether he had actually thrown the bombs which killed the high government officials in England that he said:

"Would you wish that I should confess to you everything?"

He intimated it was some other fellows but he wouldn't say who. That was a long time back, way at the beginning of the century when Savarkar was sowing his wild oats as a terrorist. It was a story-book time when Indian revolutionaries threw bombs with fuses that they lit with a match. That was Savarkar's time as a revolutionary in London and later in India.

That was when some of his fellow terrorists ("But not me," said Savarkar. "I was a hundred miles away.") threw a bomb at a viceroy, Lord Hardinge.

"Did it hit him?" I asked.

"It knocked him off an elephant," said Savarkar without exhibiting either contentment or regret.

"Did it hurt him?"

"I suppose so. He was six months in hospital with his spine."

Them were the days. But that sort of stuff isn't done to viceroys any more. That was before Mr. Gandhi introduced his specialty of attacking viceroys by swearing off food.

Savarkar is quite a sight to Western eyes. He's a leading politician at the head of the Hindu Mahasabha, an organization dedicated to giving India to the Hindus and taking it away from the British and Mohammedans.

If Savarkar has his way, the Mohammedans will get what is known in the trade as sweet damn-all. It's the sort of attitude which makes Mr. Jinnah argue for Pakistan, which is the plan to allow the Mohammedans to secede from the Hindus. I will give you an idea.

"How do you plan to treat the Mohammedans?" I asked him.

"As a minority," he said, "in the position of your Negroes."

"And if the Mohammedans succeed in seceding and set up their own country?"

"As in your country," said the old man, waggling a menacing finger. "There will be civil war."

Savarkar was not specially dressed for the occasion. He looked his worst. His sunken cheeks were unshaven, his perfectly round metal-rimmed eyeglasses were specked, and he was dressed in a soiled length of cloth which looked like a nightgown and was insecurely fastened in front with silver studs, some of which were missing.

But he didn't appear to care. He is interested in ideas. I didn't

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tell him that in America people consider political ideas dull. He apparently doesn't suspect it. When he talked over his plans he seemed to see a great American political audience with a voracious appetite for Indian politics.

His voice would become like a phonograph and he would go on and on, braiding and unbraiding a tired handkerchief while he carried on about the Hindu Mahasabha.

I suppose he's a little fanatic for our taste. But he has a certain power of personality and is definitely a figure of some importance on the Indian political scene, particularly now that many of the leading Hindus are in jail along with the Mahatma.

To Savarkar it must be rather odd to be almost the only one not to be detained. As a consequence of his terrorist activities he was sentenced to fifty years in all. The first fourteen he served in solitary confinement on the Andaman Islands, when the "old war," as he called it, broke out. Then he was transferred to the mainland and spent another fourteen years interned in a village. Six years ago he was set free.

How he managed it I don't know, but despite all this confinement he was enough in tune with the spirit of the times to get into the political whirl and come to the top of a strong minority party. He's a real story, is old man Savarkar.

I got him on the subject of Gandhi and fasts. As is everyone, he was respectful of the old Mahatma, but he wasn't respectful to the weapon of the fast. I judge he thinks fasters—always excepting Gandhi, who is in a special category even to his political opponents—should be fed through the nose with milk. In any case, he used that expression several times.

"If a fast is so effective," he asked, "why doesn't Churchill fast against Hitler? What would Hitler say?"

I didn't know.

"He'd say something rude," said Savarkar. Then he talked about America's interest in India. As an old terrorist, he did not gush the usual sentimentality about America helping India because America's heart is pure.

"The world is run by self-interest, not the Bible," he said. "What is your self-interest in India?"

He offered that our self-interest was as a fighting base, now and in the future. He foresees a long fighting future before we get the world settled and thinks we would be smart to have a little Indian good will.

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(So do I. But for a couple of years we've been losing our store of Indian good will. I don't think it's our fault. But nonetheless it's true.)

"So why not oblige India?" he asked. "You'll need her someday."

II

And now for old man Jinnah, the head of the Moslem League, Jinnah with the Pakistan plan for having a Hindu India and a Mohammedan India, as separate as the United States and Canada.

Every instinct should persuade you against such a plan but Jinnah, who has a brain like a knife, could probably talk you into it. He could make you believe the confederacy ought to be alive today. He's the greatest secessionist since 1864 and a shrewd arguing man.

I'll show you what it's like to get into an argument with Jinnah. I'll let you go up and tell him you don't believe in Pakistan, which would Balkanize India. Go ahead.

"But everything's against it," you tell Jinnah. "There aren't even any natural boundaries separating Pakistan from Hindu India. It's artificial."

That's you. Now comes Jinnah, drawing back his thin lips in a thin lawyer's smile as he says:

"Are the natural boundaries between you and Canada so important? Are there such important natural boundaries between you and Mexico?"

"Well, you see," you say, "it happens that in our part of the world things aren't quite the same, and what goes for there doesn't necessarily go for here. Different conditions and other considerations make for a different situation. If I had more time . . ."

Not too good. You'll have to do better than that. First round to Jinnah.

To put you in the picture, as they say in the Army, you're having this argument where I had my argument with Jinnah, in his new home in the Malabar Hill district of Bombay, one of the world's loveliest residential sections. A house like Jinnah's, paved in Italian marble with fifteen-foot ceilings, all new furniture, and a great curving marble terrace looking out on a three-acre garden probably would cost $200,000 to duplicate in Bel-Air, California. I don't know what it cost in Bombay, between the fantastically low cost of labor and the fantastically high cost of imported materials. Probably $195,000. But Jinnah's got the money. He'll tell you so very frankly.

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"I have made tons of money. I can make tons more any time I choose."

But he's retired from his law practice to get Pakistan for the Mohammedans.

In any case, Pakistan obviously is just a troublemaker. It will only perpetuate the differences forever. So you tell Jinnah:

"Mr. Jinnah, wouldn't it be much better to get together and work out a single scheme for a United India in which Hindus and Moslems will live together peaceably? You're all Indians, after all."

Mr. Jinnah, who is thinner than the thin man, smiles bleakly at this piece of naïveté and says:

"Do you agree that there are some differences between the Germans and Jews which make it difficult for them to live together?"

"There seem to be," you say.

"The differences between the Germans and the Jews are nothing to the differences between the Hindus and Mussulmans," says Jinnah. "At least in Germany they all speak the same language. At least they eat more or less the same food. At least they enjoy the same architecture, the same music, the same literature. At least they have the same calendar."

He picks up a newspaper and opens to an inside page, pointing to the top where there are listed four different calendars: the Hindu, the Moslem, the Sikh, and the Christian.

"You see," says Jinnah, "our differences reach to everything. The Hindu thinks the cow is sacred. Gandhi more than once called the cow his mother. What do I do? I, a Moslem, eat cow. I eat Gandhi's mother. How can we ever get along? Seriously, how can we?"

Reader, you'd better let me take over. Jinnah's making you look bad. You look terrible. I'll handle him.

"Look here, Jinnah," I tell him, "25,000,000 of your Moslems live in Hindu territory and will still be under Hindu rule even if you have Pakistan. What about them?"

He inhales deeply of a cigarette and seems to enjoy the flavor as he blows it out very leisurely before answering.

"Because 25,000,000 of my people must suffer, should I sacrifice the other 75,000,000?" (His estimate of 100,000,000 Moslems in India is probably a little high, but it's no use arguing about that.) "Should I?" says Jinnah.

"Should you? Should you?" I say. "Ah yes, interesting question, that. Yes, yes, of course. Hmmm."

"You see," says the thin man, passing his hand slowly across his

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handsome head of hair, which is a remarkable two-tone, white on one side, gray on the other, "you see, you have heard too much from our enemies. To whom have you been talking since arriving in India?"

You take over for a time, reader. I'm tired. Ask him anything.

"Mr. Jinnah," you say, "right or wrong, there is very strong opposition to Pakistan. Supposing you become convinced that you cannot have Pakistan, would you stand in the way of a United India attaining her independence?"

"But I am going to get Pakistan," says Jinnah, violently banging his frail fist on the arm of the chair.

Go after him now, reader. You've got him. Go after him. "But let's just suppose you can't get Pakistan," you say to Jinnah. "Supposing you can't get it, would you stand in the way of a United India getting its independence?"

"There's no such supposition," says Jinnah. "I'm going to get Pakistan. It is a certainty."

"But just supposing," you say.

"There's no use supposing," says Jinnah.

That's enough, reader. Don't be rude. Let it go at that. Thank Mr. Jinnah for giving you so much time. But next time you go to see him prepare your arguments a little better. He took every round but one and that was just a suppose round.

But don't let him talk you into Pakistan. Jinnah's really just an old die-hard South Carolinian at heart who thinks Jeff Davis ought to have been President.

III

On the other side of the tracks in Bombay the Indian Communists have their headquarters above a government grain shop, in a series of ill-lighted cells giving on a dark corridor and approached by a stairway which mounts on worn treads through two belts of odor, one of stale cooking, the other of the latrine.

Here the Communists not only work but live, the only difference between their offices and their bedrooms being that the offices have chairs and no mattresses while the bedrooms have mattresses but no chairs.

There are thirty single men and eight married couples living and eating in this austere establishment which centers around a dining room completely unfurnished aside from mats for squatting on the floor.

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One day here I interviewed the son of one of these Communist families.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"He's nine," said his mother.

"Completed nine," corrected the young Communist, squeezing the last bit out of his age.

He was standing stiff as a poker, barefoot, with his black hair hanging in a long bang over his thin brown face. He waited for each question as alertly as a tournament tennis player waiting for a serve.

"Do you know what Communism is?" he was asked.

"Exactly I've not learned that," he said. "I haven't yet gone to Marx classes, but I believe that it is exactly that once the capitalists should be overthrown the world would be free as a whole. Yes, that is exactly what I believe it should be."

"Well, what nation in the world do you consider the most powerful?"

"Soviet Russia and I can have proof," he said. "It is a book by Upton Sinclair. The things I have read in it show that there is a lot of poverty in many places like California."

He was a well-read little brat. His reading for the past month had included another of Upton Sinclair's—a book called *The Red Comet*, which is the story of two English boys who get in a plane invented by a man named Tim and fly to Russia where they have many adventures—and *On Top of the World*, telling of the Soviet expedition to the North Pole in 1937. He's read nearly all of Dickens, the important books of Dumas, the boys' books of Charles Kingsley, and many of the other standard English classics.

Nine years old, mind you.

But he didn't seem smart-alecky like so many advanced youngsters. Perhaps he couldn't be, with a mother who came up street-fighting the police in Calcutta and was doing her first term in jail at the age of nineteen. He wasn't a spectacled sissy. He was a sharp rascal. His mother said he goes to a Catholic school and I asked him if he believed in God.

"In God?" he said half contemptuously. "In God, no."

"Do you let the fathers know you don't believe in God?"

"How should I?" he said. "They would kick me out. I mumble at the right times and that is all there is to it."

"How about the other boys and girls?"

"There are no girls," he said, "and I don't say much to the boys. But I do once in a while. I've converted a couple of them."

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He was amazing. He said that because the two boys were capitalist types he didn't use the straight Red line on them. He came at them at an angle, converting one on the grounds that the Communists were saving India from the Axis, the other because the Communists are the only major party which has taken an effective stand for unity in India.

"I didn't use the old sorts of things," he said, "because they would have thought I am a perfect Red since they are that kind of capitalist boy."

I asked him if he had many fights at school and he said that he did since he was the smallest boy in the school and the others lorded it over him.

"Do you win the fights?"

He seemed dubious but said he won quite a few. His mother, however, said she didn't think he won very many as he often came home with bruises and wounds. He said he didn't fight about Communism but just about nothing when quarrels came up and they tried to lord it over him. He said he was quite a good athlete and that on the 1941 sports day at another school he had won a medal in the 75-yard dash. His other sports, he said, are football and cricket.

On request he gave a demonstration of his fighting style, attacking the assistant secretary at the commune, who was sitting in on the interview. He was only fairly impressive. For his age he appeared very slight.

The assistant secretary, however, had no boxing ability at all and easily lost the decision on points, although he was at a handicap, being seated on a chair when the attack came.

When he grows up the boy, whose name is Lalit Chari, said, he plans to be a fighter pilot. I asked in what army.

"The Russian Army," he said, "the Red Army."

"Don't you worry," his mother said. "Nobody's going to leave here to fight in some other army."

"It depends on the status of India," said Lalit. "If we have freedom I will fight in the Indian Army."

His mother, thirty-two, works in the commune here, the central headquarters of the Communist party in India. This is where Lalit is being brought up. There are more than forty people who live in the building, working for the party. But there are only two other children, both too young to play with Lalit, who has no companion after school. His mother won't let him go on the street to play be-

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cause of the heavy traffic in this neighborhood, so he spends most of his time sitting in his room, reading and dreaming of Soviet Russia.

He's quite a kid, and when he grows up he'll be considerable competition in this world.

IV

The inferiority complex is one of the dreadful things in India. It's partly the result of the white man's domination. But it's also caused by the Indian's own caste system.

It gives human nature in India an uneasy and unpleasant twist. In varying forms, sometimes mild, sometimes acute, it afflicts about 90 per cent of the population.

I will give you a specimen of inferiority complex which belongs in a museum. He'd been sent to see me at the palace where I was staying in Ernakulam in Cochin. I'd asked to see one of these types.

"To what caste do you belong?" I asked.

"I belong to the Backward Class," he said timidly, shrinking away when I looked at him.

The Backward Class is a cut above the Untouchables but a mile below the high castes. Just the name alone is enough to give a Backward Class member an inferiority complex.

This poor fellow, who was fifty years old, felt so ill at ease it was eerie. He didn't even have composure to sit and listen to a question with a relaxed expression.

Every time I spoke he leaned forward as if he had a cramp. He would draw his lips back so his buck teeth stuck out like a rabbit's. He'd wrinkle his nose and furrow his brow and stop breathing.

As the time came to make an answer the cramp gathered intensity until it was almost unbearable to watch his agonized scrooching.

Then with a little gasp he'd jerk back and give an answer which usually missed the point entirely.

Throwing questions at him was like throwing a ball against a jagged stone wall. It would hit some mental projection of his inferiority complex and carom off at an angle. I was chasing bad bounces all morning.

You can imagine it. This poor fellow is so degraded socially that he can't even go to a caste Hindu temple to worship his own gods. When he talks to the Maharajah, which he did on one historic occasion, he knows that the Maharajah is polluted by his mere presence. It isn't a question of polluting the Maharajah by touching him, as

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in my own case (I am developing an inferiority complex). The Maharajah is polluted by this Backward Class fellow's merely breathing the air around him. He has to go take a ceremonial bath afterwards to wash off the pollution.

If he were an unschooled peasant he would no doubt accept these indignities as part of life.

But he's a college man. He can think as well as anyone. The whole thing has put his nervous system out of kilter. Socially he's given to understand he has a frightful odor, despite the two university degrees which he prints after his name on his calling card. But he realizes orthodox caste Hindus can't stand him around.

It's a terrible thing for an adult, educated man.

Cochin is not typical of India. It is one of the most caste-conscious states. There are many places where caste has been largely thrown off. But it is still enough in existence to create these inferiority complexes, even though in a less aggravated form than in the case of this unfortunate gentleman, a very intelligent, nice man, otherwise.

The situation here, as regards caste, is a story. The old Maharajah won't even permit an Untouchable or Backward Class member within the walls of the fort where he has his home. When, for political reasons, he must see one of the creatures the old boy comes outside the walls. Then he returns for a ceremonial bath to wash off the pollution.

This sort of thing doesn't belong in these times.

Fortunately I saw the better side of it in the case of this same unfortunate Backward Class fellow. He came at breakfast time and I asked him to sit down, throwing him into confusion. He wheedled around, twisting his neck, but finally sidled into a chair. When I poured him a cup of coffee his hands fluttered like snakes, trying to thank me for the courtesy. He was just recovering his confidence when a couple of high-caste Brahmins whom I'd met at the Palace sat down at the same table.

That threw the poor fellow into another confusion. He sprang to his feet and pawed around in the empty air until he got me so nervous I was twisting my own hands. He jerked and grimaced nervously and I had no idea what kind of scene we were about to have.

But the two Brahmins turned out to be liberalized examples from the north of India. They listened to the poor Backward Class fellow's explanation of his case with considerable sympathy, even when he said he was glad there is an English prime minister in Cochin.

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They debated the matter gently with him but saw his point. He'd rather have an English prime minister than an Indian because the Englishman isn't caste-ridden.

This point was another lesson in the divisions within Indian ranks. Although all parties generally resent the British, they often fear one another more.

"Divided We Fall" was never so true of any people as it is of the Indians.

The interview concluded with the inevitable question. It rarely fails.

"May I ask you one question?" asked the Backward Class fellow, fluttering his hands nervously. "How do you treat your Negroes?"

"There is no difference in the laws," I said. "They can vote or hold office like anyone else. There are only some social distinctions which are disappearing."

"But that is all there are here, some social distinctions. We vote, and under the law we are equal. But social distinctions make a very great difference."

That's the common ending of interviews between an American and an Indian.

"May I ask you one question?" Usually the same question.

V

While in Hyderabad State I visited a number of villages, trying to get some understanding of the masses. These village visits are something everyone must do. Otherwise he will be unable to refute people who say that he has no sound basis for judging India since he doesn't understand the peasant. According to these people, the peasants are the most important element in India.

I disagree with this. I think the opinion of the peasants in India counts less than the opinion of peasants anywhere in the world.

The only function the peasants perform politically in India is to provide a sort of vague base on which the politicians may stand while they attempt to leverage out the British. The peasants are really too ignorant of current affairs to take much part in India's political life.

But these village interviews were interesting, although everything had to be done through a government translator and I was uncertain how much I had learned. Both the people and the interpreters were gun-shy. Moreover, they usually didn't know the answer any-

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way. The first experience will illustrate. Testing the peasants for world knowledge, I asked:

"What is the most powerful nation in the world?"

This question had no political ramifications to make the peasants nervous, so they went for it like carp after bread crumbs, thrashing about in Urdu and Marathi, the languages they speak in these parts. Occasionally I could catch a familiar word such as "America, Roossie, Engleesh, Gairmahn, Japahn." They were still debating when I was ready to give the thing up.

"Come, come," said the interpreter, hurrying them. "Tell us."

They had a last wrastle in Urdu and a graybeard in a dirty white shirt which hung outside his loincloth stepped forward and gave the final result, which, boiled down with the juice extracted, was as follows:

"We don't know. You must tell us."

At the next village the same question went round and round through the same mill of discussion, finally coming out the other end with the announcement: "Engleesh."

"How about the Americans?"

"Eengleesh strongest. Government strong."

"How about the Russians?"

"Eengleesh strongest."

It was no use arguing with them. "Government," as they call the "Eengleesh," is such a legend of power among the peasants that they can't quite conceive of anybody else being her equal.

Another village was more productive. I started with an Untouchable. It was a rather dramatic scene.

With the sun glistening on his polished brown skin, he stood in a ring of callously curious higher-caste villagers, scuffing his toes in the dust with embarrassment. The question I had asked was:

"Do you believe all men should be born free and equal?"

Naked except for a loincloth, lean and well muscled, with strong white teeth gleaming in his firm thin face, he smiled rather sillily and muttered something while dragging an arc with his big toe.

"He says he has nothing to say," reported the interpreter. "He is afraid to say anything with the Brahmins standing around."

The Brahmins, dressed in dirty rags, looked less clean than the naked Untouchable and for the most part less healthy.

"What if we get him in his own house and keep the others out?" I asked.

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The interpreter nodded, and we walked a quarter mile through the dusty village to the Untouchable quarter.

"Do you believe all men should be free and equal?" The question was repeated.

The Untouchable, surrounded by his wife and children, standing in a tiny courtyard before his hovel, spoke determinedly for some seconds.

"He says everything should be man to man," reported the interpreter. "He says he would like a world where there are no distinctions but a man was what he proved himself to be."

"What does he propose to do about it?"

The Untouchable, while his wife and children looked curiously on, shook his head and answered after an interval.

" 'What to do?' he says. 'What can a man do?' " the interpreter reported. "He says there is the tradition and that is all there is to it."

"Ask him if he has ever heard of Dr. Ambedkar," I told the interpreter, naming the leader of the Untouchables in New Delhi.

The Untouchable looked puzzled and the interpreter repeated Dr. Ambedkar's name. The Untouchable shook his head.

"Tell him he's the leader of the Untouchables," I instructed the interpreter.

The Untouchable looked blank.

Next victim was one of the fifty village moneylenders, a wicked usurer, a young fellow with thick black hair and a bold clever face. He was dressed like the villagers except that he wore a long-tailed shirt with a pink stripe instead of the plain white and he had a gold wrist watch with a gold strap.

"Ask him what per cent interest does he charge?"

"Two per cent a month," was the answer.

"Ask him if he knows that such a high rate is condemned by decent people and that there is a great movement against him."

"We'll reduce it," was the rascal's prompt answer with a bold grin.

A murmur of laughter went around the ring of villagers which regularly formed around every witness. The usurer joined in the laughter. They all took it as a good joke.

"Ask him if he doesn't think it wrong to charge so much."

"It is the established rate," was the answer. "People expect to pay it."

We left the moneylenders' street, where the fifty usurers live in a single row of houses, and went to the home of a man with two wives.

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The husband was out with one of the wives, but the other wife, the husband's mother, and at least eight children were there.

"Ask her if she wants woman's rights."

The wife, a tired, thin woman, looked bewildered, and the interpreter had to encourage her. At last she spoke, very hesitantly.

"She says she does not believe in woman's rights," reported the interpreter. "She says she likes to work under a man's guidance."

"Ask her if she approves of her husband having two wives."

The woman stared at the dirt floor and drew her toe across it like the Untouchable had done. She didn't answer.

"Ask her again."

This time she said something in a low voice and the interpreter answered:

"She says she has nothing to say. I think she is afraid to say anything because her husband's mother is here. But, of course, she doesn't like it."

The mother-in-law, a tiny, bent woman, dry as a stick, was asked if she approved of her son having two wives. She answered:

"It is his affair. He has decided to have two wives."

The next was a farmer or a peasant, as he might better be called. He was asked what he knew about the war.

"England and Japan and Germany and Russia and Turkey are fighting," he said.

"Who's fighting who?"

"Russia and Germany are fighting," he said.

"Who else?"

"England and Japan."

"How about Turkey?"

"She's just joined with England." (This was in March 1943.)

"Don't you know America's fighting too?"

"Yes, America's fighting with England."

"What do you know about America?"

"It is wealthy and it has big agriculture."

"What else?"

"That is all I know."

He said he hoped England beat Japan but he said he knew nothing about Japan.

"But we don't want newcomers ruling here," he said.

"Have you ever heard of Hollywood?" was the final question.

"No," he said.

The circle of villagers looked blank, apart from one man who

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lifted his hand timidly and was asked what he knew about Hollywood.

"It's a part of America," he said.

The villagers were asked if they had ever heard of Clark Gable, Ann Sheridan, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Bette Davis. Not one had heard of any one of them. There are probably 350,000,000 Indians like them.

They all said they knew Gandhi's name and that they had seen his picture spinning khadi cloth. They seemed to know he was having a fight about something but were not quite sure what.

"You know better than we," said a peasant. "You will tell us."

Only two knew the name of Jinnah, Gandhi's enemy.

"He's fighting Mahatma Gandhi," one of them said.

This was a village of 3000, almost totally illiterate.

But, as Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Dewan of Travancore, pointed out, there is a great difference between being illiterate and being uneducated.

"Our peasants are not uneducated," he said. "Can you call a man uneducated who has learned perhaps a couple of books the size of your Bible by repeating them in unison? Can you call a man uneducated who is familiar with a complex religion and its mythology?"

They were ignorant of many of the things we know, but in their manner and their conceptions they appeared as Sir C. P. said, not uneducated.

They might not know where Hollywood is, but they had a thorough knowledge of interest rates and the abuses of the usury system. They talked at considerable length about the need of a co-operative bank with a standard 6½ per cent loan rate. They understood with the terrific exactness of a tax-burdened farmer all the implications of taxes and talked intelligently of the need of lower taxes for the peasantry, who contribute the bulk of Hyderabad's revenue.

Of all these things they could speak with great conviction. And they were aware, too, of their ignorance. I asked what they most wanted, after a reduction in taxes and establishment of a co-operative bank.

"Schools," I was told after they had conferred.

VI

We will cut to a maharajah. I will give you a maharajah in the prime of his life, a vigorous thinker, the Maharajah of Dholpur.

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During the cruel heat of a late June day we lunched at his palace in New Delhi, a completely circular building which he designed himself a few years ago, so large that inside the outer rim of rooms there are three separate gardens, no one of which can be seen from the other.

The dining room, done in pale green, very modern, with a twenty-foot ceiling and rippling with wind from a tremendous fan made in Chicago, was cool as a cellar.

It was just a proper setting to hear a Hindu philosopher and autocrat weave words on subjects as strange to an American as undersea life. I began by asking him if he had the power of life and death over his subjects.

It was like asking the Maharajah if he breathed.

"Yes," he said in his low, quiet, and sure English, really perfect English, not like an Englishman speaks it, not like an American speaks it, but a sort of disembodied English that has no more accent than the pages of a book.

"Yes," he said mildly. "I have power of life and death."

"Absolute power?"

"I can have a man hanged if I don't like the look of his face." He smiled delicately and said: "I don't even need to say I don't like the look of his face. I need only say: 'Hang that man.' "

The other ten luncheon guests, including two other maharajahs, had stopped talking while this gentle, religious, and self-righteous Indian, ruler of a small state of 300,000 population, expounded his principles of benevolent despotism.

In his calm and accentless voice Dholpur concluded the subject of his life-and-death owner by saying:

"I have had a very small bag. I have hanged only one man, and he was such a merciless premeditating killer that I really had no choice."

And then he commenced his explanation of divine right of kings, which I told him would interest Americans since they consider the notion to be undemocratic, unconstitutional, and un-American.

He based his justification on the premise that there are three main temptations to democratic politicians: money, power, and continuing in power. Each tempts them to actions which are not in the public interest.

By removing these temptations through divine right, which assures a maharajah of all the money he needs, plus power and continued power without conniving, the main abuses of government

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are automatically eliminated. The maharajah won't be distracted by greed for money or the crude necessities of political life.

"But," I said, "he may covet the property of a neighboring maharajah and become ambitious to expand his power."

The Maharajah chuckled and said: "That means war, doesn't it? There has always been war, and I think there will always be war so long as this planet of ours goes round and round."

He's a most learned man, deeply immersed in Hindu thought, full of thoughtful subtleties, and to a Western mind a trifle superstitious. I did not have a chance to question him on some of the subjects which especially interested me, but I know that his family believes so strongly in astrology that the children are born to the stop watch so the exact reckoning of their future can be made.

He maintains a court astrologer, who is the son of the court astrologer maintained by his father, who in turn was the son and grandson of court astrologers maintained by the preceding maharajahs.

He owns what is perhaps the most valuable collection of pearls in the world, but there was no chance of seeing it, since he keeps it down at the country at his state palace, and, besides, I have gotten a feeling that it is not just the thing to ask a man to see his jewels. For some reason it's different from asking to see his stamp collection.

As the luncheon progressed through a series of delicious courses served with rapidity on hot silver dishes, we talked of religion, on which I am getting to be quite a talker. I am even regarded as something of an authority, being the only Christian in most of these gatherings. The Maharajah explained image worship to me.

"The man is a hypocrite who sits in a corner talking about the cosmic spirit that floods the universe," said the Maharajah. "Man is too small to understand the infinite. He must attach himself to the infinite through something finite. That is the image. If there is a universal spirit, it is present everywhere, in the image also."

He gave it another twist.

"If I take a person by the arm," he said, "have I got hold of that person? No. The man is something more than his arm. If I put my arm around him, am I holding him then? No, I am only holding his image, his body. He is something else. But I cannot conceive of this man without his image. It is necessary. Therefore in this sense the relation of every human being to every other human being is image worship."

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He said that even the humblest Hindu realizes the image he worships is not itself the object of adoration but only the connecting link between man and the infinite.

I was going to tell him how Christianity did away with this but the Hindus were eleven to one against me and I wasn't sure of my arguments without brushing up.

He also explained transmigration, which means coming to life again in another personification.

"It is the only way in which the injustices of this world can be explained," he said. "How else explain that an innocent baby dies while another lives to be a hundred? How else explain all the injustices of this world? Only that they are compensated for in another life."

He also said the other life would be a reward to those who served well in this life, that they would get a promotion, so to speak. He said he did not believe there was any heaven but that both heaven and hell were on this earth.

CHAPTER XI

Two Englishmen

THE PRECEDING CHAPTER contains a mixed bag of Indians.

But don't think Englishmen in India (or elsewhere) don't run to infinite variety. They merely conceal it better behind a façade of common tradition.

They look alike but think differently. Far more than Americans, they are individualists inside their heads.

There's no accounting for them. During these months I was meeting Englishmen at the rate of perhaps twenty a day and examining them curiously. All that developed from these studies was mystification.

The English are apt to be anything from the tall and fit officer of romance, who still exists plentifully, to the lady Communist I met who had an Oxford degree, a hysterical gleam in her eye, and a bad breath.

But it was the case of Graham Stanford of the London *Daily Mail* and the burra sahib which really convinced me of the impossibility

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of accounting for Englishmen. They represented two bitterly opposed lines of British thought regarding India.

(A burra sahib, in case you are not up on Indian affairs, means a big-shot Englishman, as compared to a chota sahib, a small-timer.)

This particular burra sahib, whom I never met, but would have disliked, was one of those old-fashioned India-brand Englishmen who are detested by the real Englishmen from England.

He was the type who had flocks of servants waiting nervously around; who sat on the club committee; who had piles of money; in short, who thought this would be the most perfect of perfect worlds if nothing ever changed. A snob and a pampered fool.

Mr. Stanford, on the other hand, an Englishman from England, had no time for prestige foolishness and wanted to get to the heart of the Indian problem on a sensible modern basis.

And there you have the fundamental clash of philosophy which came to a sudden boil in the ridiculous row over Mr. Stanford's bearer's shoes.

It appears that in Bengal, of which Calcutta is the principal city, there is a social ban on bearers wearing shoes in the kitchen or dining room. In fact, it is considered bad form for bearers to do much shoe wearing at all. They're supposed to move noiselessly about in their bare feet.

But Mr. Stanford, being fresh out of England, paid scant heed to this ruling, particularly as Mohammed, his personal bearer, had been a shoe wearer for years.

Mohammed had been around the world several times as barkeep on a cruise ship and was simply a barefoot boy no longer.

So there was Mohammed wearing shoes around the apartment building where Mr. Stanford and the burra sahib both lived.

It was a situation fraught with difficulties. The crisis finally came when Mohammed came clonking down the corridor in a heavy pair of shoes and met the burra sahib, also clonking along in a pair of shoes. It was too much. The burra sahib was roused to protest.

"Have you no shame?" he said to Mohammed.

So help me, those were his actual words, as reported by Mohammed to Mr. Stanford.

"Have you no shame," said the burra sahib, "wearing shoes?"

And the next thing Mr. Stanford knew he was confronted by the German-born manageress of the apartment, who said that the burra sahib had put in a personal complaint about Mohammed's shoe wearing.

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"But it's ridiculous," protested Mr. Stanford. "Mohammed's been wearing shoes for years. If he goes barefoot he will catch cold."

"You are now in Bengal," said the German-born manageress, now naturalized.

Mr. Stanford and Mohammed remained firm about the shoe wearing. But some sort of compromise had to be made. It became absolutely obvious that Mohammed in shoes could not go into the kitchen to get Mr. Stanford's meals.

That would be too much in Bengal. So, making the best of a bad matter, Mr. Stanford hired a barefoot boy who went into the kitchen and got the food, brought it into the corridor, where he handed it to Mohammed, who carried it to Mr. Stanford in his room.

That honored the feelings of the burra sahib, kept Mohammed from catching a cold, permitted Mr. Stanford to eat in his room, and restored equilibrium in Bengal.

As I said, I never met the burra sahib and had no way of estimating his opinion of Mr. Stanford, but Mr. Stanford's opinion of the burra sahib was shocking.

But to get back to the original point: how to account for Englishmen? You can't. The more you see of them the more they confuse you. They don't fall into the neat bracket that the word "Englishman" usually summons to our minds in America.

There's always a new one around the corner. They don't surprise only foreigners with their infinite variety. They surprise themselves. Few people have ever been so surprised at one another as the burra sahib and Mr. Stanford.

CHAPTER XII

Down the Mayu

CHRISTMAS, 1942. Calcutta made a good place to spend the Christmas season. There were the races in the Maidan. Firpo's was going full blast each night with a good orchestra and rich dinners. And the Great Eastern Hotel was packed and merry. Half the correspondents in India were there to fatten up before going into Burma for the Arakan campaign which was scheduled to open about the

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tenth of January. Although guests had to sleep five and six in a room we did it comfortably. Every man had his bearer to keep things in order. I'd brought Mohammed Ali down from Delhi with me and the CNAC pilots who shared the room each picked up a servant from the crowd which loitered around the corridors looking for employment. It was a cheery prelude before the long Arakan trip.

Then by the light of the Christmas moon the Japs came. The first time they had struck at India proper. A gala holiday dinner was in full swing at the Great Eastern, served swiftly by more waiters in stiffly starched white uniforms than there were diners in the crowded room. The orchestra was beating out a dance tune when suddenly there was a flurry among the bearers. They buzzed a moment and streamed into the kitchen. Suddenly the dining room was empty of servants and the guests were looking curiously at one another. We wondered vaguely what it was all about. Then the lights went out and the orchestra broke off. Outside we could hear the rumble of the heavy ack-ack guns. The raid was already on. Striking matches, we found our way through the long corridors into the street, which was well lighted by the moon. The guns pumped away for a time, and far in the distance we heard the thumping of bombs. That ended the raid, which was trivial. But the consequences were enormous. Although the guests returned to the dining room, the servants didn't. Some never came back. A grand exodus from Calcutta had begun.

The Japs came over a few times more, never dropping more than a scattering of light anti-personnel bombs. Many persons evacuated Calcutta, which is the second largest city in the British Empire. But in a few days so many had gone, mostly on foot with a few miserable possessions wrapped in handkerchiefs, that there was no labor even to clean up the city's garbage. The main streets became a stinking mess. The hotels and restaurants and better apartment houses had long been accustomed to dump their refuse in bins along the boulevard. With the sweeps gone, the garbage rotted in a lovely stench.

The evacuation continued for several days and might have attained disastrous proportions if the night-fighter boys hadn't hit their stride. Just before New Year's they virtually cleaned up every Jap plane which came over in the midst of another dinner. One Sergeant Tring, I believe, accounted for either three or four in a space of a few minutes. He was aided in this exploit by his gunner,

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who unfortunately had to do without credit because of censorship. Had it been known that there were two men in the plane the Japs would have deduced we had Beaufighters against them, which was supposed to be a secret. So Sergeant Tring got all the kudos for all the ships his plane brought down that night. Anyway, it was a great piece of work and whether the Japs deduced they were up against Beaufighters or not, I don't know. But they never reappeared, and the day before New Year's I pushed off for the Arakan in the company of Walter Briggs of United Press and Martin Moore of the London *Telegraph*. We rattled through a land of palms and lagoons and then boarded a river steamer which was lashed nose upstream, with four other side-wheelers like a bundle of sticks. At sailing time we peeled off one after another into the Ganges with a great splashing of paddles and curved off into the slow current. Behind us, backed to the edge of the river bank, stood our train silhouetted against the sky.

There's something about a side-wheel steamer traveling down a broad muddy river on a sunlit winter day that surpasses every other form of transportation.

It takes you back to a century when the world wasn't so hard and fast and tough. It's quaint and old-fashioned and restful. There's nothing to dodge and nothing to duck. No horns, no sirens, nothing disturbing.

You just sit on deck in the drowsy sunshine, watching the trees and huts and sandspits go leisurely by. And when a bell rings you go into the snug first-class dining room, which, with its four tables, seating sixteen, is as cheerful as a New England cottage.

Bearers, starchily clean in crisp uniforms topped by snowy turbans, banded with red and gold, served us an excellent five-course meal—hot soup, fish from the river, chicken, rice and curry, and a floating-island dessert. And then back on deck again to read a book or talk to fellow passengers or just sit and watch the scowlike Indian sailing boats go creeping by. Late in the afternoon, as the sun began to slant its rays and the breeze blew off the water with a chill, the little company again assembled in the dining room for tea and cakes.

And then the sky gradually lost color, the stars came out, the evening moon by which the Japs had been bombing Calcutta came over the horizon, and we had rum and then dinner. And after that the side-wheeler pulled over to our station (Chandpur) and we got off and boarded the train for Chittagong, which is across the Bay of Bengal from Calcutta.

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The first-class railway carriages were packed with officers bound for the front and the three of us had to split up. I found myself in

a compartment with three young Englishmen, eleven pieces of baggage, four bedrolls, and five cases of liquor. When we had stowed this stuff away the compartment looked like a rummage basement.

"You chaps did bloody well for yourselves," said one of the officers to the other two, while he looked at the liquor.

"Not when you consider it's for a whole —— regiment and will be the last we'll get for six weeks," said a slim boy with a neat black mustache who wore a bandoleer of cartridges like a Sam Browne belt. He ripped a slat off one of the cases, and produced a bottle of South African brandy, which he distributed in tin cups, just as the train gave a few preliminary jerks and the general commotion outside reached a crescendo. There was another banging on the door and an English voice shouted:

"Any room inside?"

"Full up," shouted the boy with the bandoleer.

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"Not an upper?" came the voice from the outside.

"No bloody fear," called our man as the train creaked into motion while bells rang up and down the platform.

The dome lights in the ceiling of the compartment had been painted blue for blackout, and one of the officers climbed into the upper berth and worked with a nail for a screw driver. A sudden burst of yellow light flooded the compartment and the officer held out the blue bowl for inspection.

"Did you ever see so bloody many bugs?" he said, pointing to a couple of hundred insect carcasses which had accumulated at the bottom of the bowl. "Bloody awful country, this. Wait till you get below Cox's Bazaar. You'll see more kinds of bugs and snakes than you ever thought of."

The train rolled along at about thirty miles an hour, the car springing up and down with a motion that had everybody's head jerking in time. After an hour we unrolled our bedrolls and turned in, taking a last loving-cup nightcap from one of the tin cups.

In the morning the train was standing in a long valley of rice paddies.

On the left a range of densely wooded hills, parallel to the railroad, ran out of sight down the horizon. Clumps of bananas and incredibly skinny flag-pole palms with wisps of frond at the top made a tropic pattern on the sky.

On the right a high embankment, a quarter of a mile long, enclosed a small lake. In all the uncultivated spaces grew a flowering shrub loaded with lovely pale lavender blossoms.

"It's a weed that grows everywhere," said the lieutenant, nodding at the shrub. "You'll be sick of it before long."

We waited there until a hospital train rolled slowly by, all the patients apparently well enough to be in uniform and sitting up.

"Probably malaria cases," said the boy with the bandoleer. "This is bloody awful country for fighting a war. I'd like to do my fighting in Libya, actually."

We jerked along a few miles at a time, standing for ten or fifteen minutes between jerks. Every time we stopped, coolies from the rice paddies climbed up the embankment and stood near the train.

They didn't try to sell us anything or ask for any money. They merely came up by the train to do their regular talking among themselves. We'd get out and stand in the sunshine. I found Briggs and Moore swapping lies with a couple of officers with whom they'd spent the night.

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Then we were off again, rattling briskly and reaching Chittagong, a little coastal export town for tea and jute.

Chittagong, of which no one had heard until the Arakan campaign got under way, rambles over a lovely country of steep hills crested with magnificent trees. On the hilltops in well-staffed bungalows lives its sparse aristocracy, which must be a dog-eared brand of empire settler. The best wouldn't come to Chittagong, which isn't quite enough out of the civilized world to be adventure and not enough in it to be entertaining. It's a rusty, run-down dismal place disfiguring a splendid landscape, but was clothed in brief importance at this moment. The British were jumping off into the Arakan from there and the Japs were paying it the compliment of smashing the docks with bombs from time to time. The tropic outpost depravity was romanticized by the uniforms, the army bustle, and the huddle of shipping at the sagging docks, but we left it without regrets after a dreary night in the governor's gloomy palace, which had been converted into a barracks. We boarded the *Ailsa*, an unforgettable little craft, which used to be a Rangoon tugboat. The Army had made her a member of the curious naval weapon known as the Sunderbans Flotilla, formerly known as the 2000th Flotilla and sometimes known as Wavell's Navy, out of respect to the general, its godfather.

It is a mystery why it was ever known as the 2000th Flotilla, as there are only a handful of flotillas in all the world. But it was called Sunderbans with logic. Its original job was to patrol the Sunderbans, which is the delta of the Hooghly River between Calcutta and the Bay of Bengal, a sort of Tom Sawyer region of secret islands and channels where it was feared the Jap might make an infiltration. He never did.

For the Arakan campaign the flotilla's duties were extended to supplying this western Burma campaign, which was being fought in another river-infested land without roads. In so doing it became involved occasionally in a bit of river fighting to the alarm of the Bengali seamen, who had just learned to man their guns and would just as soon have been fishing as fighting. Rather have been.

When we got aboard the *Ailsa* our traveling company of reporters had been increased to four by the addition of Graham Stanford of the London *Daily Mail*. We had also been joined by Charley, a captain in the Rajputs, who flashed into eminence just before we started down the river, when to his consternation an Indian subaltern handed him a document which nominated him

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commanding officer, responsible for the discipline of the hundred-odd enlisted men aboard, and also for their being equipped with life preservers.

"Good God," said Charley as the boat pushed off, "how am I to know if they have life preservers?"

"Ask them."

"But if they haven't, we're already gone."

"You'll probably be court-martialed if we're sunk."

"Oh," said Charley. "Oh."

He immediately set off to look for the master of the *Ailsa* and by walking rapidly was able to comb her from end to end in three and a half minutes.

"There isn't any master," said Charley. "At least I can't find him. Maybe this document means that I am the master."

"Have you looked on the roof?" we asked.

"No," said Charley, and we all went up on the roof. The roof is probably not a nautical term, but that's what it amounts to on the *Ailsa*.

We didn't find the captain on the roof, but we did come upon an extraordinary sight—a four-foot Bengali soldier, who must have lied about his age, standing irresolutely behind our ack-ack guns.

"What are you supposed to be doing?" demanded Charley.

"Sahib," gasped the boy, who apparently wasn't blessed with any brains. "Sahib, sahib."

That seemed to be all he knew to say. The captain regarded him fixedly for several seconds and the boy nervously began to put on his life preserver, evidently expecting to be thrown overboard.

When we came downstairs again, the master of the *Ailsa* had been discovered. He turned out to be a lieutenant from Wolverhampton, an artillery man who had been redone into a sea captain the past October. We'd seen him all along, but as he wore an army uniform we didn't take him for a sailorman.

"Have you ever been a sailor?" asked Moore.

"No, no," said the sea captain tranquilly, "no experience at all."

"How do you run this vessel then?"

"I have very good *serangs*," he said, meaning Bengalis who serve as mates.

He nodded at a couple of aged Bengalis with long gray beards who looked like twins and were busy ringing little bells on the bridge and screaming at the steersman.

By some system of river reading they knew when to go left and

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when to go right to avoid sand bars. That is, they knew most of the time. Once we came a cropper, right in the middle of the river.

It was no surprise, however, the surprise being rather that we hadn't run aground sooner, as the Bengali who threw out the lead had been chanting for some minutes that we only had six foot six of water beneath us. Everyone knew the *Ailsa* takes six foot nine.

Some time earlier we had passed a hulk sunk in the middle of the river below Chittagong.

"Coal barge," said the lieutenant, who, incidentally, was twenty-three years of age. "Sunk a couple of months ago by a bomb. Very interesting."

"Why interesting?"

"I was tied alongside her coaling up the *Ailsa* when the bomb hit."

At some length the lieutenant outlined to us the aims and objects of the Sunderbans Flotilla, which, as he described it, was not a spit-and-polish navy but a quick-and-dirty.

"We were thrown together to get things done," said the lieutenant. "We're every kind of tugboat, barge, sloop, and launch the Army could lay its hands on. We've had to train our own gunners and generally teach ourselves the trade."

The little *Ailsa*, with her coal-dust decks and her surprisingly large engine champing steadily in an open well, found her way through the East Bengal inlets like a mouse after the cheese. One channel branched off another and that branched off another until the landscape must have looked from the air like the shining skeleton of an ancient tree, branch upon branch growing out of the Bay of Bengal.

Sitting on the roof, taking the sun, we tried to figure out what our night's destination, Cox's Bazaar, would look like. There was something fascinating about the name. It sounded like the White Man's Burden.

We went through a marshy land, a flat country of salt grass and birds, emerged into the Bay of Bengal, ran down the coast for a few miles, then turned inland up a broad inlet, which wound like a carelessly dropped rope through a richer country where cows ate in the meadows by the water, and palms and bananas grew on the higher ground.

Just before sunset our inlet broadened until it became a bay, than narrowed and curved around in a U. At the deep end of the U we could see Cox's Bazaar.

Out of a palm and banana grove a trickle of dirty shacks, roofed

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with corrugated iron, ran down to the water's edge and spilled over in a rusty trickle of pier pilings.

The *Ailsa* soon ran aground, which appeared to be the expected thing, because sampans and batuums, or some such name, swarmed out in a slow race to meet us, nudging their gaily painted prows against the *Ailsa's* sides like bright chickens fighting for corn.

As soon as the launch came alongside so many soldiers sprang down on her roof, like a boarding party, that she almost overturned.

The native pilot popped out from his cockpit in alarm, blinked at the invasion on the top of his launch, and shrilly complained in Chittagonian, which they tell me is a compound of Bengali, Arakan Assamese, Burmese, English, Portuguese, Ahbor, Mugh, Kaki, and Hindustani. Nobody understood a word, but the launch was rocking so ominously that the soldiers began springing back aboard the good old steady *Ailsa*.

Cox's Bazaar, which, believe it or not, was named after a Mr. Cox who started a bazaar here, scatters woven bamboo huts across a good many acres of rolling hill land, shaded by palms, bananas, and great green trees with broad shiny leaves.

At the end of a pleasant lane we found the station staff officer, who directed us to a woven bamboo rest house where an overeager band of porters set up our cots, hung our mosquito nets, and unrolled our bedrolls.

Then we were led off to the other end of town, where an Indian doctor punctured us with fresh doses of cholera serum in case we should stop a cholera bug, and fresh doses of anti-tetanus in case we should stop a Jap bullet.

I guess he didn't know the precautions we had in mind not to stop a Jap bullet, but we pretended it was the thing we needed most.

This was one of the hardest wars to get to on record. Nearly every other war is near some place. This war wasn't near any place. Before they had this war nobody came here at all except broken-down traders and an occasional scholarly horn-rimmed-glasses anthropologist, who peered at the natives, taking notes.

But suddenly, because there was soon to be a battle, everybody was coming at once, hitching rides on boats, trains, and trucks, which never started at any hour except 6 A.M., making travel miserable.

The next morning we caught our first truck ride and immediately hoped it would be our last. Up early, we came traipsing down a tree-lined lane in the dark to intercept a convoy of forty trucks which had camped a few miles down the road.

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When the first truck came by we flagged it and asked for a lift. The driver, who spoke nothing but Bengali, waved us to the rear to look at the accommodations. We turned this truck down because there were too many boxes with sharp edges.

We could not feel comfortable in this truck, we were sure.

The next truck had too many Indian soldiers in it. We would be crowded, we decided. "No, thanks," we told the driver.

The third truck was piled high with sacks of feed for mules. We would be too near the roof. If we went across a bump we might bang our pretty little heads on the roof. We refused this, too.

We skipped the next ten trucks to sort of get a fresh start and stopped the fourteenth truck. This really didn't have room for us, and the fifteenth truck was already boiling, so we skipped it too.

Instead of getting better, the accommodations got worse, until finally we were down to our last two trucks, no choice but to pile in.

Our party divided between the two of them, which were loaded nearly to the roof and contained four Indian soldiers apiece as supercargo. The only way to get in at all was to huddle in rows like toboggan teams with our heads ducked forward to miss the roof. Off we went and we never stopped for six hours except for two ten-minute rests.

There had never been a road before the last monsoon. It had been built in a few months, like a dike, through forest, bush, and meadow and was not bad considering, but there was a tremendous amount to consider. It was terrible, looked at any other way except considering. There had been no caterpillar tractors, no bulldozers or machines of any description, not even wheelbarrows. It had been built by tens of thousands of East Bengalis, equipped only with two road-building tools: a mattock and a basket.

As we jounced along in the early morning mist, which hung like pennants among the tall trees, this enterprise was still in full swing as the Bengalis were double-tracking the road. Up and down the entire length they swarmed like ants, employing their simple technique.

With his mattock a road builder would loosen about fifty pounds of dirt, which he then packed into his basket. Balancing the basket atop his head, he'd stagger and wobble up to the road, barely making it, half collapsing as he dumped the dirt. It's a good enough way to build a road probably, but demands a different attitude than the American.

At the rivers and streams, which abounded, other crews were busy building bridges. The bridge-building tools were simple too.

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To drive the piles, which were cut out of the surrounding forests, the natives rigged up latticeworks about twenty-five feet high made of bamboo poles as thick as a boa constrictor.

On the top crossbar a pulley was hung and a thick rope run through it. To one end of the rope was attached a mighty iron weight. To the other end was attached a gang of coolies.

Chanting some kind of working song which sounded like an African war dance, the coolies hauled on their end of the rope until they had the heavy weight at the top of the contraption. Then they let go and the weight gave a driving smash to the piling. Not beautifully fast or efficient, but it built bridges, although I might as well admit early in the game that we lost this particular little war. It was a very small one, though. We hardly counted it.

After six hours on this road, riding in the cramped position of bobsled riders, we reached a place called Tumbru. There's no point trying to locate these places on the map.

Then we were on another of the ships of the Sunderbans Flotilla, an almost identical twin of the *Ailsa*. This one was called the *Lali* and did very well until about sunset, when she went aground until the early morning tide. But in the morning before we got up she had skimmed the bar and we arrived at Maungdaw, which is in Burma.

The place where the battle would start was now only fifteen miles away.

When we docked an officer greeted us with a cheery shout. Obviously he was preparing for a great stroke of humor.

"Are you chaps replacements?" he said.

"Sure," we shouted, "we're replacements. Ha-ha-ha."

"Well, your other chaps are all alive," said the officer, "but they nearly had it, didn't they?"

This shook us. It seems my former roommate in Delhi, Wilfred Birchett of the London *Daily Express* and Gordon Waterfield of Reuter's, who were a couple of days ahead of us, had been strafed in a sampan. The Japs came at them six times and everyone in the boat was at least wounded and one of the sampan wallahs was killed.

We had another spell of trucking the next day and arrived at a place called Buthidaung, where we began to get into the local color of the trip. Buthidaung was on our final river, the Mayu, a mighty tidewater stream which runs up the middle of the Arakan peninsula.

Checking in at headquarters, a teak building on stilts which had

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been a schoolhouse, we found an Anglo-Indian boy slugging it out with a field telephone. The telephone had the boy on the ropes but he was still in there swinging trying to reach a Captain Adair.

"Hello, hello," he kept repeating while a captain who was trying to give instructions to an Arakanese spy fidgeted in irritation. "No, I don't want Forward. I want No. 5. Yes, No. 5. This is No. 3 speaking."

He kept going through this routine until we were all getting nervous when he suddenly hooked Adair.

"Hello, Adair!" he shouted.

"Hey!" The captain bounded over to him and shook him by the shoulder. "Captain Adair to you."

The boy looked up with mild alarm and shouted into the phone, "Is this Captain Adair, please?" and gave him a brief message.

When we had this off our chest we could give attention to the Arakanese spy, who was standing rigidly at attention in a red and blue checked skirt, topped by the jacket of British battle dress.

He was just a kid, small, cleanly built, with an alert, walnut-colored face. He had his rifle slung over his shoulder by the strap and was intently following something the captain was indicating on the map. After repeating it several times the captain said, "*Tee Kye?*" This is the Hindustani equivalent of "O.K."

"*Teek,*" said the boy earnestly. This is the equivalent of "Oke."

The captain indicated the interview was over, and the boy saluted him leisurely and exactly. Then, turning deliberately on his heel, he walked slowly out of the room. He was on his way to spy out a Burmese village in Jap hands.

When he left us he would unsling his rifle, which had been issued primarily to bolster his self-respect, take off the British battle dress, and top off the costume in Arakanese style.

If he didn't come back in a week, he would have been caught and shot or worse—or possibly would have changed sides.

The big headquarters room, which had been used by the Japs for the same purpose, looked like the inside of a barn. The walls were roughhewn plank of Burma teak, for which we pay enormous sums at home. Big rafters supported the peaked roof and the whole effect reminded me of a painting of the Civil War headquarters of some Southern general, Stonewall Jackson or Jeb Stuart.

The modern touch was supplied by large-scale maps which alternated on the walls with air photographs of Rathedaung, the Jap-held town we would attack in a few days.

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There was a constant coming and going of sergeants and runners stumping up the shaking stairs, saluting their way in and saluting their way out. From time to time the telephone rang and the Anglo-Indian boy called some unfortunate officer to the phone, who bellowed, strained his hearing, got red in the face, and finally shouted to the room in general and the orderly at the typewriter in particular:

"Look here, I bloody well can't hear a thing. Would you mind stopping that racket for a moment?"

The racket would stop and he would look sheepish and say: "Sorry, but I just couldn't hear a thing."

Long after the soft Burmese twilight had deepened into night the staff was still struggling with its typewriters and telephones by the light of hurricane lamps which threw deep shadows in the barn-like schoolroom. A captain who was pulling on his battle-dress jacket came over to me and said:

"There's a convoy of sampans full of Indian soldiers about to push down the river. Come along. It's quite a sight at night."

It was a little before nine and the orderlies were laying our dinners.

"They'll hold ours," said the captain. "There's not enough plates for everyone at once. It'll give them time to wash a few."

He led the way down the rickety stairs, showing the way with his flashlight. When we reached the road he switched it off, saying:

"We're so bloody short of batteries."

As we walked down the road, our eyes adjusting themselves to the starshine, the captain pointed out the local points of interest, giving a commentary like a newsreel spieler.

Flashing the light on momentarily, he pointed to a white picket fence which ran around a little plot of ground.

"Who were they?"I asked.

"Japs. Bomb casualties. Mind the little ditch now." The light switched on again, playing on an empty house on stilts, reflecting once in a mirror.

"The Jap officers did bloody well for themselves," said the captain. "Do you know what they used that for?"

"No."

"A brothel. The locals tell us they kept six geishas in there, plus a phonograph and plenty of booze. Too bad we didn't capture the lot."

He switched the light off again and we walked down the road in the dark. We crossed a bridge and turned down a footpath. He

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snapped the beam on an L-shaped stucco building, quite new, standing on a little rise.

"Courthouse," he said, and swung the light onto a small building adjoining. "That's the jail."

"Who's in the jail?"

"No one just now. But we had some spy suspects until day before yesterday. Shot a couple of them after trying them in the court. Shot them under that tree over there."

He flashed the light across a field and faintly lighted a twisted tree which looked at that distance like an apple tree.

"How did they take it?"

"Bloody marvelous. Looked straight down the gun barrels and never asked a thing. Mind now. You're going to climb an embankment."

We came on a small dock where a company of men was moving about in the light of hurricane lamps, looking like smugglers in a motion picture. Going to the end of the dock, the captain called out:

"Hello, Peter. You there?"

"Here, Bob. We'll be pushing off before long."

"You've bags of time. The tide won't turn for half an hour." The captain turned to me and said:

"Have a quick look now. I don't want to show much light. You can't tell who's around looking. No use showing them anything they wouldn't see otherwise. Look down here, now."

He switched the light onto the water where the sampans were slowly twisting with the tide. Surprised at the glare, the Indian soldiers turned their faces toward us. Some were lying with their heads on their packs. Others, on their feet, rifles slung over their shoulders, were looking for a place to park their equipment.

At the sterns of the sampans, leaning easily on the curved poops, stood the sampan wallahs or boatmen in their white gowns, waiting for the signal to back into the river. The light went on.

"They're about ready to go," said the captain. "Well, now you've seen the way we move our Army out here. I'm afraid it wasn't so much to see after all. Hello, Peter."

From the other end of the dock came Peter's voice. "Here, Bob. We'll be off in a quarter of an hour."

"Righteeho, Peter. Good trip."

"Cheerio, Bob."

The next morning we took off in sampans ourselves.

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It was a day of days, a dream day, floating slowly down the broad tidewater river, talking, sleeping on the woven bamboo roof, and brewing coffee on the sampan wallah's little stove, which was made of a gasoline can, fueled with dry sticks.

On either side green saw-tooth mountains, tiger country, reached down the horizon toward the Jap-held sea base of Akyab. The warm sun was shimmering across the half-mile-wide river and the meadows which ran to the water's edge were cheerful with the lowing of cattle and the occasional notes of a lark. This was what the man meant who first coined the phrase "smiling country."

But it was deceptively smiling. More than ever Kentucky was, this smiling section of Burma has been a dark and bloody ground where the Mughs and Moslems have fought their cutthroat, village-burning feuds for generations.

And this time it was to be British against Japs. But that didn't stop the Mughs and Moslems from carrying on their vendettas. The Moslems had teamed up with us and the Mughs were working with the Japs. But they did little enough to help either side. They were too intent on taking every opportunity to loot and raid each other. Their battle began before ours. While we floated down the Mayu, the windless sky was marked with the tall smokes of village fires.

We stayed that night at a river camp called Sedidaung where sleep was murdered by a Sikh. It was the same thing every two or three hours all night long, a patient, monotonous, timid voice, saying in mechanical English:

"Leftenant, Leftenant, Leftenant Kirkpatrick."

There would be a muffled cursing from the blankets next to mine and the unfortunate Lieutenant Kirkpatrick finally would pull himself together to say:

"Kirkpatrick heah. Now what the bloody hell?"

"It's I, sir, Sardara Singh. I am unable to find a dugout, sir. I must leave at ——"

"Damnit, Singh, I know when you must leave. Now look here. You only need four hours to get up the river. I've told you that by eight o'clock I'll have you in a boat. Now for God's sake let me sleep."

"Thank you, Leftenant, thank you. But I must not be late. The battery would——"

"I told you I'd get you off at eight. Is that enough or isn't it?" Whereupon the soldier Singh, a Sikh, would stumble down the hill

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to worry and fret for a couple of hours, when he could stand it no longer and would come up to the tent and say timidly:

"Leftenant, Leftenant, Leftenant Kirkpatrick."

The poor devil had been selected by his regiment to go upriver and collect all the back pay for a month. The finance officer was leaving the district at one o'clock. If Singh were late he'd come back empty-handed, probably to be hung by the beard by his disgusted fellows.

This was only one of the disturbances of a sleepless night.

As we sat around the shielded campfire at the advance supply depot the officers and men chilled our blood with tales of this stealthy river warfare.

Only a few nights before five Jap launches, riding the incoming tide, had drifted through our lines in the heavy mist and were edging up on this base when, luckily, they were spotted by a sentry, who shouted.

Spinning their motors, they swung around and disappeared in the night, to be seen later by an alarmed British lieutenant in a sampan, who crouched in silence, escaping observation until the enemy chugged out of sight.

The palm-leaf hut which Lieutenant Kirkpatrick invited me to share for the night sat halfway up a hill at the edge of this river. Every so often a sound of singing and the chunking of paddles would float across the water, and then the shouts of the sentries would ring out, loud and challenging, waking me up wondering if the paddles might not be in the hands of Japs posing as friendly sampan wallahs.

It seemed so simple for them to come upstream with the tide, singing loudly to allay suspicion, shoot the sentries, spray us with tommy guns, blow us up with grenades, and then jump back into their sampans and disappear into the river mist.

That's the kind of war this was. These things were tried every so often. These great tidal rivers, which run six hours one way and then six hours another, made a perfect playground for guerrilla fighting. They're so broad—anywhere from a quarter of a mile to two miles wide—that a small ocean liner could almost hide in them when the night mist rises. There need be no warning sound of motors. By taking the tide and steering with sweeps, the river boats could move silently up and down with scarcely a possibility of being sighted.

Our first attack on Rathedaung, when a raiding party beat up the Jap installations, was done just this way. Our sampans had floated

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right up to the docks before they were spotted—and then it was too late to prevent a landing

The next day we traveled in dugout canoes which seemed to shoot past the bank, riding the tide with the wallahs bending to their oars. My dugout got off late because of the mysterious actions of our Indian soldier. Each dugout on this last leg of the journey carried a soldier with a tommy gun. Our soldier couldn't get in.

"*Jow*," shouted the transport officer, meaning "Go." The soldier just fooled around on the bank, looking stupid.

"*Jow jelte*," roared the officer, meaning "Go quickly." The soldier grinned bashfully and twisted his tin hat in his hands.

"*Jow jelte*," bellowed the officer in a tone that meant business. The soldier slowly climbed down the bank and slowly crept into the boat. We were just about to push off when he slowly crept out of the boat.

"Now what's the matter?" screeched the officer.

"I forgot my tommy gun," said the soldier, and he crept slowly up the bank and got his tommy gun and crept slowly down the bank and climbed slowly into the boat.

"Shove off," said the officer, but just then the soldier crept slowly out of the boat and crept slowly up the bank.

"What the hell is it now?" screamed the officer.

"I forgot my cartridges," said the soldier, slowly picking up the cartridges.

Just then we heard a shout behind us and saw another soldier come sprinting across the field, holding a huge red and blue rooster by the legs. The rooster was squawking and flapping its wings, and at the sight of it our soldier's face lit up into a wonderful broad smile.

"*Tee Kye*," he exclaimed, "*Tee Kye, Teek, Teek*," and, folding the rooster in his arms, sprang quickly down the bank into the boat.

"Wawk, wawk," went the rooster and we shoved off, swinging around in the strong tide and rowing hard to catch the convoy, which was disappearing around the bend.

We stayed nearly a week in a Mugh village called Tizwe, which sat on the bank of a broad tributary of the Mayu. The Japs were only four miles away. But we never saw one. All we could see were teak trees and mango trees with great clusters of orchids clinging to their trunks. The orchids were withered. It wasn't the corsage season in the Arakan. But the hibiscus were in full bloom. And there was a quaint stiff bloom which grew in the sunny places. On slender stalks, swaying in the occasional breeze, hung crimson bells, so

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fragile that the sun shone through them, outlining the veins. Overhead the sun-sprinkled foliage was merry with the twittering of little green birds, birds of a violent green, who came and went in little excursions staying cheerfully together, talking all the time.

It was so beautiful it almost hurt. The weather was like a benediction. The sky arched in cloudless blue, just pale enough so it had that look of winter sky in a sunny clime, and the sun spread a gentle pervading warmth, in which you could drowse. A little later the monsoon would begin. But for the first few weeks it was paradise weather.

The scenery repeated itself over and over. An irregularly shaped piece of land was marked off from the rest of the country by the broad channels of the tidewater rivers, which varied in width from the main channel of the Mayu, a mile and a half or two miles wide, to lesser channels one and two hundred yards across.

On the fringe of the river banks rose the trees in pleasant groves, which soon tapered into a belt of the flowering shrub with pale lavender blossoms which swelled up like a colored wave. Beyond this shrubbery lay the paddy fields and here and there like islands in this flat country rose small cone-shaped hills, heavily clothed in this lavender brush. It was in a cluster of these islandlike hills that the Japs had established their strong point near Rathedaung.

We took it easy these days, lying about in the groves, talking to the soldiers and basking in the warmth and watching the preliminaries of the battle. There was always enough doing to drive away boredom. For example, we were in the camp of Lieutenant Colonel George Stannus of the Lancashire Fusiliers when the field telephone twirped.

The colonel got up from his canned salmon, nearly upsetting the packing box he was using as a table and entered the palm-thatched hut where the phone had been installed.

"No. 50 here," he said, using his code name. He listened a moment and put the phone away.

"Brigade says four bombers and six fighters will be over Rathedaung at one twenty-five," he told his officers as he returned to his salmon.

"They'll be right on tick, too," said a captain. "There's a good place to see the fun. Go to the top of that telegraph pole up the river where they're swimming the mules across."

The steel telegraph pole, braced with four heavy cables, carried three heavy strands which looped nearly a hundred yards across the

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river. It stood a good fifty feet high, higher than your fearless correspondent could climb without getting dizzy.

At the base of the pole fifty or sixty mules milled about, hee-hawing nervously as they waited their turn to be whipped into the river.

Barefooted Pathans, Punjabi, and Sikhs, stripped to their shorts and armed with bamboo poles, dragged and beat the balky brutes into the water, even getting behind and shoving and somehow never getting kicked. Lunging and buck-jumping, sometimes rearing on their hind legs in fright, the mules finally plunged into the water, were caught by the swift tide, and swirled downstream, straining their necks out of the water as they began to swim.

At their heads, hanging onto the halters and dragging them around if they started back to the near bank, swam the nearly naked Indian mule tenders, flailing the water with one arm and supporting themselves on the halters with the other.

As fast as one mule made the plunge another was beaten into the water, so that an endless sagging string of black heads moved across the fast tide. On the far side, scrambling and panicky, they heaved themselves onto the bank and were herded out of sight among the trees.

At eighteen past one the hum of the airplanes came out of the north.

They crossed the river a couple of miles below us, flying at about 6000, the bombers moving steadily and the fighters cutting their patterns and seeming to play in the air.

Meanwhile, on the ground below a company of Pathans was preparing to cross the river by sampan and dugout, embarking at a point a hundred and fifty feet below the mule crossing.

With full packs on their shoulders, carrying their rifles in the right hand, parallel to the ground like a stalker, they filed down the river-side path to the little sampans, climbing in silently and without orders, hefty, hook-nosed fellows with fierce eyes.

In sharp contrast to the turbulent mule scene, the crossing of the Pathans was conducted with an almost sinister quiet. They gave the impression of animals on the prowl.

The planes straightened into the bombing run. For a few seconds the work below stopped as everyone listened. The twitter of the hundreds of birds which infest these groves seemed suddenly loud.

Then the slow heavy woofing of the bombs came floating across the countryside, not loud, but big-sounding, with a rumble.

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Columns of dust suddenly rose like magic at Rathedaung four miles away, standing in the quiet, sunny air above the green landscape.

Never hesitating, the bombers kept going straight for home, passing us half a mile away in a sudden crescendo of sound, while the fighters stayed to strafe.

They shot below the tree line, out of sight, and stayed hidden for so long it seemed they must have crashed. While we were watching and listening, the whining sound of their diving engines crossed the river, passed us, and there was comparative silence again.

Then one after another they appeared a mile down the way, shooting into sharp outline against the sky. A moment later we caught the delayed sound of their machine guns, which had strafed the Jap in his fortifications.

They headed for us in broken formation, each ship on its own, flying low. The left wing down in a long curve, one of them shot across the river directly above the mule crossing with a thrilling roar, wobbling his wings as he saw us.

An officer, standing among the mules, took off his cap and waved it.

"Good luck, pahl," he shouted and, grabbing the hand of a half-naked mule tender in his excitement, he said: "How do you like that, pahl? That's the stuff we give them."

And that's something you're never likely to see—an English officer so thrilled he pumps the hand of an Indian mule-tender.

And that was all. Before I fell off the pole I got off.

Two days before the battle all the other reporters including the wounded Waterfield of Reuter's, who had joined us, were called back for a conference with Wavell to be held at Maungdaw.

Only Maurice Ford, the Paramount newsreel man, and I stayed, shepherded by our Army Public Relations officer, Captain Vaughan-Jones.

And then one night we crossed the last river between us and the Japs. We filed across the paddy fields under the starlight to a cluster of hills which lay three quarters of a mile from the Jap hills.

The attack was teed up for the morning, and our brigadier, Arthur Verney Hammond, provided us with such a hill as Napoleon on his best day never had for seeing a battle start.

There was a stand of heavy bamboo to watch from. I spread the poles to see. The gorgeous warm winter sun was just beginning to evaporate the streamers of mist from the meadows, and on the dot

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the whine of our bombers came over the hump to ring up the curtain.

They came in low, so low we could see the bombs fall out, hang below the planes, and then vanish in the downward rush of their own speed. And then the seconds went tick, tick, tick and the smoke popped out of the trees, slowly twisting. Another couple of seconds ticked off and the concussive thud of the bombs shook the atmosphere. "A-wumph, a-wumph."

A thousand crows flung themselves into the air, cawing peevishly, and in the meadow just below, the water buffalo stopped their feeding to gaze to the south. Then the fighters came in and strafed the three temple-topped hills where the Japs had dug in for their stand. And after that our guns went off with a slap, slap, slap and the shells came whistling over in a thin parade of high explosive. The mules in the thicket at the meadow's edge stirred uneasily, hee-hawing, and one of them went into a panic, breaking into the open, buck-jumping until he pitched off his two metal trunks of ammunition. Three bearded Sikhs with their hair and beards braided rushed out to bring the little villain in.

Under the barrage the Fusiliers began to move forward. In long lines strung far apart they crossed the meadows between the little brushy hills, keeping cover, staying in the shadows of the brush, making their way round to the far side, where they would be exposed to the Jap fire, nerving themselves up to that awful moment when the machine guns begin to chatter and the rifles begin to pop. . . .

Getting ready for that crucial period when your pal dies alongside you and you have to go on, creeping into the brush with a hand grenade and a rifle, trying to be stealthy and making a noise like an elephant. . . .

That terrible time which lasts for hours, when you listen for the machine guns, try to spot them by the sound, try to creep up on them, always making a noise like an elephant in the impossible dry, brittle, nearly impenetrable brush where the Jap is hiding.

There they went, the P.B.I., the poor bloody infantry, as our cousins, the British, called them. There they went and the battle was really on. There was nothing more could be seen from the hilltop. There was only one way to see the rest of the fighting, which was to go up in the brush.

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CHAPTER XIII

Burma Battle

BURMA, 1943. D Company lay sweating and panting along a narrow path, hemmed in by a sea of brush, that sort of lilac covered with the palest lavender flower, standing higher than a man's head.

The Jap hadn't made a sound yet, not a tick. He lay somewhere ahead in the narrow canyon, listening.

The captain, a redheaded Liverpool Irishman in a Teddy Roosevelt hat with a cockade, came striding back from further forward, walking jauntily, as if there weren't a thing to be afraid of.

"We're going up this hill to the left, take the temple on top, and hold it," he said, as if it were merely a stiff climb on a hot day.

"He thinks we're a —— panzer outfit," said a Tommy under his breath, looking up toward the temple, whose corrugated iron roof shone in the hot sunlight, visible through gaps in the brush and trees which covered the nearly perpendicular slopes of the hill.

"There'll be a spot of light machine-gun fire," said the captain. "We'll have a chance to see some of that scrapping ability you fellows have been talking about."

"I'd rather be playing a —— game of monopoly or some other —— game," a sergeant whispered in my ear.

"We'll go forward now on this partridge drive," said the Liverpool Irishman.

The men rose in scattered fashion, hesitating and sweating, but grinning—queer little gnomes, few more than five feet seven or eight with comical, cheerful faces, cheerful and comical even at this dreadful moment.

"Coom along," said a corporal with a crooked grin to his section. "I'll be the —— first to get shot."

"You won't be the —— last," said his tommy gunner.

The company crept slowly forward along the narrow path, making a God-awful crackling noise as booted feet broke twigs and rifles and haversacks caught on dry branches. A beetle couldn't crawl through this country without making a noise.

"This is no —— country to fight a —— war in," said a Tommy.

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"The —— Jap —— well knows where we are. He'll be —— giving it to us in a —— minute."

Still we went forward, sweating and crackling and snapping, while the Jap lay up there mysteriously silent, squinting toward us from his machine-gun posts.

"This is —— stupid," said Tommy. "This —— well can't go on."

We reached a small clearing and the Liverpool Irishman said, "We go across here and up the side of the hill. Keep your eyes open. When you spot a machine-gun nest by the flashes, stalk it and beat it up with your grenades."

At a crouch, holding his rifle in his hand, followed by his section, the stocky corporal ran into the clearing.

"Bap, bap, bap, bap, bap," went the Jap, hosing the clearing with a machine gun.

"Zing, crack, crack, zing," went the bullets. Suddenly they were cracking past our ears and we plunged into the brush, smashing the thickets, trying to press our heads into hollows. Half a dozen of us found a ragged cut in the ground which had been washed by last year's monsoon. It was too small to climb in, but we could lie on the edge and stick our heads into it, like men drinking from a stream.

I can tell you from this one experience what fear is like, and those Tommies agreed this is a pretty accurate description.

Every damn thought and feeling is wrung out of your body, except a worn-out, tired, hopeless sensation in your stomach and your chest and up and down the backs of your legs. You feel you can't do anything about those machine guns, that nobody else can do anything about them, and that you're going to be dead maybe in the next second. You feel as though somewhere you made a great mistake.

And then the guns stop and the fear oozes away and you look up and see a grinning, frightened little Tommy, creeping for a better 'ole.

You start creeping for a better 'ole, too, making a fearful crackling noise, and then, "bap, bap, bap, bap, bap, bap," and "zing, zing, zing, zing, zing," and all feeling is squeezed out again except that numb, tired, hopeless fear sensation. The guns stop again and you notice what seems a miracle. Nobody in the vicinity has been killed or even wounded.

"He's a —— bad shot is the —— Jap," I remember a Tommy saying, looking at me with a sweating face like a caricature, snaggle-

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toothed and red with the high blood pressure of overexcitement.

We lay up in the thicket some time while the captain and a fighting patrol worked forward to find a way around the Jap machine guns.

It was very still again. There were only the humming of the insects, the cries of the birds, which seemed little agitated by our war, and the occasional chatter of a machine gun in the next canyon. Minute by minute we became more cheerful. Instead of lying quietly we began to whisper. Then a Tommy said out loud:

"—— me, but this is a bloody way to spend a —— afternoon. My old woman would have kittens on the mat if she saw me bloody lying under a bush waitin' for a —— Jap to beat me up with a machine gun."

That probably was not a great witticism, but it drew a big laugh. In our more than turbulent state of mind it seemed very funny. So another Tommy played for a laugh, saying:

"Jim, would you mind goin' around to the pub and gettin' me a pint? I've —— worked up a thirst. That's a gent, Jim."

And another said: "I won't be votin' —— Tory when I get home."

This was all terrific. We had great laughs. We were feeling better every minute. One Tommy after another put in his two bits' worth until we nearly rolled out of our thicket laughing.

"Bap, bap, bap, bap, bap."

We had our faces in the dirt again. Each one of us felt like a magnet drawing bullets.

"Bap, bap, bap, bap, bap, bap." The Jap gave us one burst after another.

We'd given ourselves away by laughing at witticisms that wouldn't even draw a smile under normal circumstances.

"Bap, bap, bap, bap, bap, bap," went the Jap; then one of our guns joined in with its heavier booming roll. The canyon seemed to rock with fire as one gun after another on both sides joined in, firing at enemy flashes. Both sides were showing their hand. The battle was on. The firing rose and fell, but it didn't quite stop. Not for a time, not for a long time, as we lay there, wriggling in the dirt.

It fell silent and we could hear the birds and the insects again—and then a faint faraway little "poop" sound to which no one would have paid attention unless a sergeant had said:

"The —— Jap's firing his —— mortar."

Then a long wait, and finally a smashing explosion a hundred

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yards away which made the ground tremble. Another "poop" sounded from behind the Jap lines. We flattened out. This time there was a louder smash and the ground rocked.

"He's got us taped," breathed a Tommy. "The ——. He's got us taped."

He half got up and began crawling across the canyon, followed by half a dozen others.

"Bap, bap, bap, bap, bap." The Jap had caught our movement and the bullets came zinging past again.

We flattened out and the mortar "pooped" again and we lay, hardly breathing. The ground seemed to jump up. A soldier cried out. We started to scutter again. The infernal machine gun went "bap, bap, bap, bap, bap," and we were pinned down. The boy who'd been hit was moaning.

From somewhere on the right one of our machine guns began banging with its comforting "bong, bong, bong," driving the Jap's head under or perhaps putting him out of action.

The mortars stopped falling about the same time. We scuttled for it under cover of our machine gun, a couple of soldiers hauling the wounded man, who was moaning and gasping.

The moaning changed the whole atmosphere. The afternoon suddenly seemed like one of those little battle poems where in the bright and shining weather the red drops fall one by one.

They pulled the boy into a depression and crouched beside him. A sergeant was bandaging his foot, which had been half cut off by a piece of shrapnel.

His face had turned gray with pain. The perspiration stood out in fat drops which seemed sticky and didn't roll off his face. He was gasping, but when they stuck a cigarette in his mouth and touched a match to it he seemed to collect himself. He even managed a faint smile.

The captain suddenly appeared, still jaunty, but sweating and pushing through the brush, looking for us.

"Here you are," he said cheerfully. "We're pushing forward again. We'll have to cross that clearing where the snipers are working. But if you step out you'll make it. He isn't very accurate."

"Here comes the bloody scrap," said a soldier.

"We're going up to the temple this time," said the captain. "Our machine guns have silenced most of their posts. Come along now."

We crept up the path amidst the sea of brush until we came to the clearing. In the middle a man was moaning. He was moaning very

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quietly. The captain spoke sharply but positively, the sweat standing out on his face.

"That's one of our men," he said. "Shot twice through the stomach. When you go across you'll pass him without stopping. The Japs have that position taped exactly. Any man who stops will be shot and we'll have two casualties. Is that clear now, chaps? You will not stop to help the wounded man. You understand why."

He was sweating as he spoke. The soldier in the clearing moaned with every breath. The Tommies looked dumbly and hopelessly at the captain.

"All right now, chaps," said the captain. "Up to the temple."

One by one, clutching their rifles and stooping, the men rushed across the clearing. The Jap machine gun never opened up. It was one of the guns that had been silenced.

The press conducting officer and I carried the wounded man in a ground sheet until we found the stretcher-bearers. On the way back a runner passed us with the news that the company had taken the temple without opposition. The Jap had left.

After what happened when I came back later, I thought I'd go back to India and study the political situation.

They strafed us seven times and, if you want my opinion, strafing should be put in a class with poison gas. It should be eliminated along with machine guns, artillery, bombs, hand grenades, and rifles.

The strafing came about four o'clock. After delivering the wounded man to the stretcher-bearers, I went back into the brushy canyon where the Tommies had just cleaned out the Jap.

Some planes were flying overhead.

"They're ours," a Tommy said.

"The little ——'s going to get it now," said a corporal with a snaggle-toothed grin.

We could hardly wait for the little —— to start getting it. The planes cruised off a ways and one of them peeled off in a dive, driving straight for us.

All of a sudden it cut loose with a hideous racket. The air seemed to split and crack into a thousand splinters of violent sound.

Then it was gone. I took my nose out of the dirt and looked over at the corporal, who was just taking his mouth out of the dirt and trying feebly to give a snaggle-toothed grin.

"It wasn't one of ours," he said weakly.

"Get your —— heads down," said a Tommy. "There's another coming."

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The second one busted down on us, opening earlier and blasting longer. I was so unstrung I discovered I was beating my feet on the ground like a baby in a temper.

We were all so wilted we couldn't do a thing but lie there, breathing heavily and palpitating as one plane after another ripped us across with a shattering racket.

When it was over we could hardly even muster the strength to grin. We certainly didn't have strength to carry in all the dead and wounded who ought to have been lying around.

Only there weren't any dead and wounded in our vicinity. It was almost disappointing to go through so much and find it was next to nothing.

The comedy relief after a scare is almost indescribable, I think. It depends not merely on the essential humor of the situation but on the reaction. It's the reaction that makes men laugh until they're weak. After the strafing we had one of these laughs over my bedroll.

It was the biggest bedroll in Burma, a United States Army bedroll which once belonged to a sergeant. It became famous, as it was roughly the size of a howitzer and should be carried by a mule instead of a man. These Englishmen would come up and examine it with the same curiosity that savage tribes exhibit when they first see an airplane. They used a single blanket themselves.

When we advanced for this first day's battle, everyone left theirs behind, as they planned to be fighting or on guard all night. But I felt I must keep fresh for good reporting, so I shouldered my bedroll, which actually looks more like a trench mortar than a howitzer, and staggered off to battle, while even the acting lance corporals and privates laughed.

At battalion headquarters, which was a good place to spend the night, I abandoned the —— United States sergeant's bedroll, as everyone called it, and advanced in more mobile condition.

All day long, however, as the machine-gun bullets whipped by and the mortar bombs fell around, I kept myself buoyed up by thinking of what a good sleep I'd have that night when I got back to my bedroll. Toward evening I started back, full of thoughts of the bedroll.

"Don't you —— go round there," said a Tommy, crouching in the brush at the base of the hill. "You'll get mowed down by a —— sniper. He's got that corner —— taped."

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"But my bedroll's around there."

"It don't make any —— difference to this —— sniper whose —— bedroll is —— where," said the Tommy. "He'll —— type your —— initials on you."

That was definite enough information. That was what you call real army intelligence.

"He's a ——, that —— sniper," said the Tommy. "You'd better go round the other —— way over the —— hill. It's only about two —— miles."

On the other —— way over the —— hill I got drafted for more stretcher duty, carrying a Tommy who had been shot. He was a very short little fellow but he kept gaining weight as we staggered and sweated over the hill. He also kept trying to get up.

"I can —— walk," he said, trying to roll off the stretcher and nearly throwing us all into a —— canyon. "I already walked a —— half mile from where I got —— shot.'

"Tie the —— down, if he won't —— lie still," shouted an irate sergeant who had also been drafted for stretcher duty as the regular stretcher-bearers always seem very busy doing something else when there are any stretchers to be borne. Groggily we staggered on, violating all the first-aid rules about how to pick up a stretcher case. After every rest, instead of picking him up gently all of a level, we'd heave up one corner and then the other, so he'd yell:

"Owoo, owoo, I'll —— walk."

Just as we got over the hill we met a doctor coming forward.

"What have you got there?" he asked the sergeant.

"A —— wounded man who won't —— lie still," said the sweating, irate sergeant.

"Let me see, lad," said the doctor.

"I can —— walk," said the lad. "These —— are —— killing me the way they —— carry this stretcher."

"This lad has only a flesh wound," said the doc. "He can walk."

"That's what I —— told them," said the lad. "They —— near killed me bringing me over the —— hill."

"Well —— off then," said the sergeant. "I'm no —— stretcher-bearer."

This brought me within half a mile of my bedroll just as the sun was going down. I started approaching it from the opposite direction when I ran into Colonel Stannus.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

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"To get my bedroll," I said. "I left it at our headquarters this morning."

"There's a sniper who has our old HQ taped," he said. "He wounded several chaps there and we've had to move. Is it very important that you should have your bedroll? Is it that huge thing I saw you carrying this morning?"

"Yes sir."

"Well, if I were you I should leave it there tonight unless you want to try to slip in after dark and chance it that the sniper doesn't see you. You might do that, if you like."

I didn't like. I walked two miles back to where I knew there was a blanket and —— froze the rest of the night.

Next day, advancing toward the bedroll, I met the colonel.

"Oh, Treanor," he said, "our artillery put a direct hit on that sniper last night. We got your bedroll and I and my second and third in command slept in it. Wonderful invention, that bedroll. If your Army furnishes that kind of bedroll to a sergeant, I'd love to see what an officer gets."

Well, with the first, second, and third in command sleeping in my bedroll, I could hardly ask to have it back.

"But you'll be really needing it," the colonel said. "We can get along without it. Really, you'd better take it back."

"No sir," I said patriotically. "I won't be needing it at all. I have a very warm blanket and I would like to feel that I am doing my part by contributing the bedroll."

An acting lance corporal laughed right out loud when he heard this piece of bull. He —— near dropped his —— tommy gun.

When we advanced three days later I recovered the bedroll, since the colonel had no soldiers big enough to carry it forward in addition to their guns and hand grenades. I reoccupied it and never carried it forward again but withdrew every night and had a good sleep to keep fresh for better reporting.

That first afternoon cooled my eagerness to see war from the front seat. Thereafter I took my combat at what might be called a major's distance instead of a lieutenant's. That machine-gun stuff isn't for fun. Once you've had it you never want it again. How could you?

It was bad enough even hanging around the neighborhood. The trademark of this war was sniping, and every so often, "zing," one would go by your ear, taking the joy out of reporting. There was no way to avoid being sniped at. The battle was at such close quar-

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ters in those brushy hills that even brigade headquarters was only about a mile or a mile and a half from the lines. I don't know that anyone was ever hit at that distance but it wasn't comfortable.

Sometimes it was the classical sniper who skulks around with a rifle, potshotting from ambush, and then sneaking off to another ambush to potshot again. He was nerve-racking enough. But the worst were the machine-gun crews which took up unexpected hidden positions and made life miserable.

I saw the beginning and I believe the end of one of these outfits the third or fourth afternoon of the battle. I was just strolling along, keeping cover in the shadows of one of the brushy hills, following a Punjabi runner to D Company headquarters, when a Punjabi corporal came limping by with a blood-soaked bandage just above his knee. The runner exchanged some words with him and then said: "Sniper."

"How far ahead?" I asked.

"He doesn't know."

We crept mighty cautiously, hanging in the shadows and making quick dashes around points. Pretty soon another Punjabi came along, just a kid, holding his bleeding right wrist with his left hand, half trotting and gasping and talking to himself. He didn't waste any time on us. The Punjabi runner and I sat down in the brush to talk this miserable business over, only our conversation was limited, as the language he knew best was Urdu and mine English.

Before long we heard "bap, bap, bap" ahead and then "bap, bap, bap" again. So far as I'm concerned, it's impossible to judge distances of gunfire, although there are experts who will tell you to the yard. But I couldn't tell whether this thing was a mile away or a half mile.

In any case, the "bap, bap, bapping" continued sporadically, and then around a corner came six Punjabi soldiers, carrying a wounded boy in a chair they made of their arms. Three of them would carry him fifty yards or so, then the other three would take their places. They were moving quite rapidly, breathing heavily.

The poor boy was groaning and seemed to be begging them to set him down. He had a broad red splotch on his groin. The runner got some fairly definite information from one of the Punjabis and said it would be safe to go ahead a distance. We slipped along, hugging the side of the hill until we met a sergeant in the Lancashire Fusiliers, a stocky, pugilistic little fellow with a beer drinker's face and a mouthful of broken teeth. He swaggered around a corner, paying no heed to the sniper.

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"Have you got a cigarette, pahl?" were his first words.

I don't smoke so I didn't have any.

"Where's that sniper?" I asked.

"That ——," he said and that was all.

"Did he have a bang at you?"

"He —— well did," said the sergeant. "He opened up on fifteen of us. We dove for a machine-gun trench and the other —— fourteen was ahead of me. I landed on top and some —— said to me, 'Get your —— head down.'

" 'How can I get my —— head down,' I asked him, 'when all you —— are beneath me?' "

I asked how we could get rid of the sniper and he said it would have to be done with artillery. He'd been spotted in a thick clump of trees which ran out from a Jap hill like a spur into the paddy fields. The sergeant took us to an opening where we could look out on the sniper's hide-out.

It wasn't long before we heard the "whong" of one of our guns and then three more "whongs" in a row as a battery opened fire. The shells came sailing over and then the smoke and dust jumped up amidst the trees.

"Whong, whong, whong, whong," went the four guns again, and more smoke and dust jumped up amidst the trees. It was what is known as a search, an artillery search, like an exploratory operation. They gave him about twenty rounds. That was the last we heard of his sniping—from that post, at least.

But there was always another starting up somewhere.

CHAPTER XIV

Poona

Poona, 1943. Poona was a sad affair. It was such a forlorn and useless defeat for Gandhi. He misjudged terribly and must have suffered not only the humiliation of losing but of losing through his own fault. It was a pitiful anticlimax to the career of the man who had been a world figure and a household name longer than anyone in this century. As a great personage, he predates Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, or Hitler. His only rival was Mussolini, whose glory had

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always been phony and who never managed to be taken quite seriously. Gandhi had seen them all come and some of them go. He himself seemed to be going on forever, playing his peculiar game of mild weapons and saintly persuasions.

But Gandhi, too, had for some time been through, although no one yet knew it. Even as the war began, and perhaps beforehand, he had been misreading instead of reading events. He had most of all misread the British Empire, taking it to be softer than it was. That was in his brain and, basing his decision on the premise of British softness and weakness, he became a finished man. All his grand strategy turned faulty.

True, he can readily be excused for the mistake. He had abundant company, not only among Britain's enemies but among her friends, and not only among her friends but within her own family. But sharing a common mistake doesn't maintain a man in his greatness. Gandhi necessarily fell from his pedestal, the great crash coming in the spring of 1942 when he acted on the conviction that Britain was so far gone that the Japs would take India. That was a historic and mighty smash, worthy of a man of Gandhi's size. The Poona fast was only a further and pitiful breakup of the pieces. It was the comeback attempt, with all the sadness, humiliation, and futility of comebacks.

Apart from this underlying tone of sadness, Poona was a pleasant interlude for correspondents—more vacation than work. Most of the reporters in India came down for what was believed to be the death watch. We all lived in the Poona Hotel, a pleasant enough second-rate establishment standing in a sunny garden. We had our servants to attend us, enough work to keep us mildly busy, and plenty of time for reading, talking, and napping.

The days passed in serene routine. We'd bicycle to the Aga Khan's palace, four miles out, check at the gate on the visitors, bicycle back to the home of Dr. B. C. Roy, Gandhi's personal physician, for the midday conference, have luncheon, and then bicycle about to the houses of various wealthy Indians who were hosts to the distinguished visitors calling upon the old Mahatma. Nearly all the traveling was done by bicycle because taxis were so expensive and charged such exorbitant prices to wait. Moreover, the bicycling was agreeable. Poona, at a considerable elevation above the sea, was warm but not hot.

For what was supposed to be a world story, the Gandhi fast was the least exciting and the slowest assignment possible. There was

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nothing in the way of action but to wait for an old man to starve, to be freed, or to survive. The rest was interviews and wrestling with the censorship, which at first was fearful but progressively became more and more reasonable.

Poona, which is a tranquil British military cantonment town whose very name connotes propriety, stuffiness, and a Kipling kind of imperial life, ignored the affair magnificently. Probably no place was less interested in whether Mr. Gandhi died than Poona. Its shaded, dusty, tired streets betrayed no excitement. Its charming clubs, which are laid out in the pleasantest, most homelike manner to make club architects at home scratch their heads in puzzlement, went tranquilly about their amusements without a ripple of concern, and the Indians in Poona took less interest in the affair than the Indians in some of Gandhi's great centers. Such demonstrations as took place were feeble and easily broken up.

Even in the homes of the rich Indians where Gandhi's visitors stayed there was a peculiar house-party air. The constant comings and goings, the new faces, the endless meals and coffee and tea servings, the automobiles coming up the drives, the handshakings, the greetings and farewells combined to give these places an air of sad festivity something between a wedding and a funeral. Some of the richest men in India, Gandhi's backers, appeared in Poona, stayed a few days until their turn came to visit the Mahatma, and then disappeared to be replaced by other rich men. There is something about the atmosphere that surrounds the very rich which makes total melancholy impossible. They are themselves too brisk and self-assured. These Indian rich men were just like all rich men in that respect.

At the same time the episode was highly educational. I had never even begun to understand the roots of the Indian problem until the Gandhi fast. But living for days at a time in an atmosphere of politics I couldn't help but absorb, and at least think I understood something of what India's difficulties were. It was more a seminar than newspaper reporting—with the dramatic addition of Gandhi's starving presence in the background.

In particular it was an education in large politics with issues so great that public clamor and immediate consequences seemed to play almost no part in determining policies. This was illuminating to an American, coming from a country where a flood of inspired telegrams and post cards can alter a long-planned program. Far from it in India.

Gandhi could have died, there could have been riots or even revolt

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and perhaps a world revulsion against British policy, and still, I think, the Viceroy would neither have wished to do it over again differently nor would he have recanted any part of his stand.

He made his decision, stayed by it, and seemed prepared to take the consequences, even at the crisis when the doctors, including the British, renounced responsibility for Gandhi's life if the fast continued.

It was a lesson in the difference between statesmanship and the lesser and sharper game of politics. Such a spectacle presents itself only seldom and only when a strong and unwavering man with great powers and thorough backing holds control. It was worth seeing, although it didn't make a drama but was completely static, since Gandhi neither died nor was freed but arrived at the end of the fast just where he had come in, a frustrated and defeated political prisoner. The only difference was that he was further frustrated and further defeated as well as weak and famished.

My admiration for the manner in which the Viceroy disposed, apparently permanently, of the Gandhi menace to British rule is not, I wish to make clear, an admiration for the policy itself, which to the minds of many Americans is rather unsupportable, being simple repression. It's admiration for a political action which did not deviate from its course because of pressure or the prospect of becoming enveloped in a storm. If wrong, at least it was true to itself.

Both Gandhi and the British in India are so given to ambiguities in stating their aims and justifying their actions that I was never exactly positive what points Gandhi was fasting for nor why the British wouldn't grant them. Hairs were being split into thousandths.

But it boiled down to this—that Gandhi wished to restore himself politically after sinking into obscurity in prison. And the British didn't want him to.

And it all went back to the fact that Gandhi and the Indians had grandly butchered their chances of independence for the duration of the war, at least. All their maneuvers after the riots and sabotage of the summer of 1942 were feeble stoopings to pick up the bits.

To spare their pride they accused the British of deliberately setting back the clock in India with the war as a pretext. The disagreeable fact, however, was that, by hostile acts at a crucial moment when Japan seemed to threaten India, they had *forced* the British to set back the clock and jail their political leaders by the thousands. If the British take advantage of this situation later and keep the

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leaders in jail, outsiders may have a right to point the finger. But the Indians themselves have a poor case.

I don't think Gandhi should be too greatly blamed on moral or patriotic grounds. If he thought the Japs were going to wrest India from Britain, why should he not try to spare India the bloodshed of being a battleground? Why should he not look after India's best interest? And why should he look after Britain's? But on the other hand, why should the British allow Gandhi to remain in a position where he could look after India's best interests to the detriment of Britain's?

Gandhi simply had made a mistake. Even so, that was only a local event in the real problem of India, which I became convinced during this Poona interlude was really insoluble. I became convinced of a number of things, one of the most important being that it's deceptive to compare the Indian problem with that of any other country. You can say, as Indians say, their voices rising in indignation:

"But the Brazilians rule themselves. Have they as old a culture? Are they more civilized than we? And the Mexicans. And the Peruvians. How about them?"

But that isn't the way to look at it. As Jinnah says, the Indians aren't to be compared with other peoples because they are of so many races, unamalgamated, speaking different languages, disliking one another, following different gods, eating different foods, going by different calendars, governed by different sets of laws even when they live on the same street, celebrating different holidays, and producing different cultures.

You can add on your own that they are cursed by caste, cursed by religion, cursed by poverty unspeakable, cursed by a certain futile mentality which comes of being a subject nation, cursed by inexperience, cursed by frustrations a hundred years old, cursed with an inferiority complex, and cursed with cankering bitterness against their masters.

India is prophetic with doom. There will be no happy solution there, I can assure you. In this already disordered world, do you think one fifth of the world's total population can waken and bestir itself without crushing things and without being injured itself? Do you think it can store anger as it is doing without striking out one day? It can't.

With such a twisted, unbalanced background, do you think it can come of age reasonably and peaceably according to the schedule of somebody's highly advertised solution? Don't be silly.

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And, moreover, India's come of age too late. She's missed the boat. There are too many nations too far ahead of her for India to have a chance of settling her problems unhindered. She can't be turned loose.

The great hulking, illiterate, inexperienced, neurotic mental case of a country can no more be expected to make an immediate success of self-government in such times as these, or any times in prospect, than you could be expected to go to Washington and take over the war finances.

Success isn't to be expected. The divisions would appear immediately. And then all the hungry nations round would sponsor the troubles. And before long they would be loaning the hostile factions a few tanks and planes on the quiet with gunners and pilots inside to get the experience.

What else do you think could happen if India is turned loose in this kind of world? Or do you think there's going to be a different kind of world? Good for you.

The customary alternative is to say: "Don't turn India loose on the world but give her dominion status like Canada, so she will be held together within the framework of the empire."

That's stuff for Britishers to read. So long as the British continue their previous policies in India the real solution of the problem can't even be begun. The first thing India must do before she gets down to her fearful task of becoming a nation is to get rid of the British.

The problem is too fundamental to be solved with patchwork British methods of doing a little here and a little there, which is all the British could permit—all we could permit, for that matter, if we were the unfortunates in control.

What one of us would allow a couple of million Indians to be machine-gunned or imprisoned during the birth pangs of revolution? What one of us would allow minorities to be cruelly oppressed? None.

But some kind of a revolution is what must come sooner or later. India has farther to go than Russia ever did. And she'll have to travel a hard road. What chance have patchwork methods of teaching freedom step by tiny step? They've been trying that for twenty years in India and they're farther from it than ever. Most of the provincial governments have been disbanded, tens of thousands are in political prisons, the British are ruling the country with an iron hand, and the Viceroy isn't even speaking to the most important Indian, Mahatma Gandhi.

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That's where the step-by-step method has led.

I should remind you at this point that these are merely the opinions of a visiting Californian. They aren't official, even though they're correct.

So maybe the British can't be of help. The Indians are sick of the British. And the British are sick of the Indians.

If they separate, then what? Then we're back to the first proposition where the hungry nations round about sponsor the quarrels and furnish tanks and planes on the quiet.

And then there will be the cataclysm, and perhaps out of it something will come and perhaps not.

There is the other supposition that the British stay regardless, come hell or high water. If the British don't change their methods it will only lead to the same thing. The bitterness will grow and grow and India will become more and more of a cause until by violence she tries to free herself. And there'll always be some hungry nation waiting to help her when the time is right. There'll still be a war.

It's an instinct to believe that if one thing isn't a solution another must be. I don't think this follows in the case of India. I think India is a problem which will have to be sweated out the hard way. It's a thing beyond control of neat schemes with trimmed edges.

I can't convince myself that one fifth of the world's population will start throwing its weight around in these chaotic times without dislocating the world. No paper scheme can begin to make a framework strong enough to contain a fifth of the world's population when it is in its convulsions of change.

It's a morbid picture, but then it's a morbid world where millions are dying by the gun, tens of millions are ridden by fear, and hundreds of millions are teetering between malnutrition and starvation.

The matter of future population alone is alarming. If you believe the theory that pressure of population causes nations to go to war, the 1941 Indian census will give you grounds for grave concern.

In ten years this subcontinent which is already starving has added 50,000,000 to its population—more than the total population of any European nation except Germany and Russia.

This extraordinary increase is not the result of artificial factors, such as lengthening the span of life, which has been a large reason for the increase in Western populations. The average Indian still must expect to die before thirty.

It's a matter of fertility. Should infant mortality decrease, should

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deaths of mothers be cut down until they are only four or five times the American rate, an absolutely explosive situation might be expected.

The single factor of maternal mortality could make a huge difference. At present it is estimated 20 mothers die out of every 1000 in childbirth, as compared to 2.9 per 1000 in England and Wales.

If this were cut down to merely 10 mothers out of every 1000 it would increase the female population in a decade by more than 6,000,000. It would increase the total population more than this, as these 6,000,000 women in the ten-year period would probably produce another 6,000,000 children.

If, on top of this, infant mortality should continue to decrease at the rate of the last twenty years, still another 7,000,000 would be added.

There still remain to be taken into account the millions that could be added if cholera, malaria, and other diseases were brought under a greater degree of control and if general health were increased by better diet, sanitation, and other public health measures. There is a marked tendency for improvement in all these fields. Add this to the astonishing fertility of the country and you have a population increase which staggers the imagination.

It is no doubt true that the birth rate would begin to take care of itself, but for at least a generation or two this would have no marked effect as the other factors would be dominant.

It certainly is not beyond probability that the present phenomenal rate of increase will be stepped up during this decade to such a degree that for the period of the 1930s and 1940s India's population increase will amount to the total population of the United States, or not far short of it.

In fact, the only factor which seems at all likely to cut down this increase would be a horrifying famine.

Meanwhile, there is some encouragement in the fact that for the short-term outlook the present program is a success so far as maintaining a base for the war is concerned. Indian munitions production, such as it is, has progressed satisfactorily, and the Indian Army is large and in some sections good. Unless the situation should unexpectedly change, which seems out of the question now, the British have a thoroughly workable arrangement in India.

Staying in India, however, it is easy to take too optimistic a view of the Indian situation and to think that all that matters is maintaining peace and order during the war.

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My visit to China changed this somewhat. Before talking to the Chinese everything appeared simpler.

The British had crushed what threatened to become a serious rebellion. Out of possible chaos they had created a workable wartime regime. Even though based on repression and the injustice of imprisonment without trial, the program worked. Considering it is war, it seemed a justifiable program.

The disadvantages were not so apparent. But, with the Chinese outlook in mind, it becomes as conspicuous as Everest on a sunshiny day that the United Nations' objectives in the Far East are confused and handicapped by the British policy.

It is not so much the original British repressive action which occasions distrust. In the crisis, repressive action, perhaps, was the only answer. With the Jap threat of invasion imminent, strong measures had to be taken.

But the Jap threat of conquest no longer appears imminent, despite the recent march into Assam. More imminent is a United Nations conquest of Burma.

And yet, despite this completely reversed situation, the British policy toward India has not been changed. It remains a policy of imprisonment without trial; in short, of continued repression, although the original emergency no longer exists.

Despite protestations and promises of the British that India one day is to get her independence, no apparent step is being made in this direction.

Is it any wonder then that the sincerity of United Nations' aims is in question? It isn't. To the best of my observation the rank and file of educated Chinese, although not necessarily official Chinese, entertain the fixed opinion that Britain does not intend to free India before or after the war and, as a corollary, that she has not reformed in other imperial respects. That is becoming my own conviction as well.

In China it appeared to me that all the British arguments, white papers, lawyerlike allegations and assertions that it is impossible to proceed further until Gandhi does this and Congress does that are regarded as bull.

The Chinese choose to believe that these are no more than excuses to keep the imperial foot on the Indian neck. They look for new excuses after the war.

In this conviction they are in complete agreement with the Indians.

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Like the Americans, the responsible Chinese officials do not always go on record condemning the present British policy in India. Strictly speaking, it is none of their business, any more than it is any of our business.

But, not strictly speaking, the British policy is everybody's business. The Japanese certainly make it their business, pumping out the propaganda that Britain is no better than she used to be and if you don't believe it, look at India . . . and, if you still don't believe it, listen to Churchill.

Vice versa, it becomes the business of both ourselves and the Chinese to the extent that the United Nations' objectives are weakened by the actions of one of the main members.

In my estimation the Chinese are not hoping for India's independence from any burning desire to see justice done to India.

I think their hearts ache for the Indians just about as much as ours do, a very slight pain from time to time. The Chinese have a much more practical reason for wanting India to be independent.

The Chinese simply don't want Britain around the Orient in her old prewar role, and they think that the British treatment of the Indians indicates that that is exactly what the British are planning.

Now again, strictly speaking, this is no business of ours. It's scarcely becoming of us to say China is right or Britain is right. Our only concern is how it affects the whole prosecution of the war. And apparently it is a certainty that it affects the prosecution of the war unfavorably, cooling China's enthusiasm on the one hand and providing the Japs with perfect propaganda on the other.

The Japs already have the catchiest slogan that's come out of this war, "Asia for the Asiatics," and the British policy plays right into Jap hands, especially at this time when Japan is masking her real intentions behind quite persuasive programs to give occupied China and Burma more and more self-rule.

Of course, pretty is as pretty does in the final analysis. The Jap lies will be found out, if they aren't already.

But meanwhile, in the principal area where a member of the United Nations has a chance to do something, she isn't doing it pretty.

Poona wasn't as serious as this chapter may sound. Part of the time we enjoyed ourselves in the same way as if we were covering a routine political convention, lounging around the hotel and watching for any amusement that might turn up. It was in Poona that I

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saw my only mongoose and cobra fight. I was sitting in the sunshine when an Indian said:

"Just for lookings."

"How much?" I asked.

"Just for lookings," he said, "you pay what you like. Very good boxing match. If no good, you don't pay. Just for lookings."

"One rupee," I said, "but they have to box well. What kind of snake do you have?"

"I have python and cobra, very good snakes, very lively. Which you like first? Very good boxing match. I leave snake and mongoose alone together. I let them kill each other."

"All right," I said, "one rupee."

"Just for lookings," he said. "You pay what you like."

He took the cover off a basket and hauled out a thick, evil-looking sluggish python and dropped it on the ground so it thudded. At the jolt the snake wriggled angrily, then subsided into a sort of coma in the warm sunshine.

The mongoose on a string tried to run away.

"Very good boxing match," said the Indian.

He handed the mongoose on a string to his assistant and then applied himself to sharpening up the sleepy python. Blowing through a pipe, he sent a jet of air up the snake's back. The snake moved wearily. He blew a harder jet and the snake wriggled as if it had been tickled.

"No good," I said. "Good-by."

"Sahib, sahib," he said, "look, look."

He took a switch and began beating the snake, which writhed angrily. Before the snake had lost its pep he picked it up and threw it twenty feet, so it landed on the unfortunate mongoose, which ducked its head and cowered.

The python did a quick coil and wrapped one fold around the mongoose. Then it relapsed into its coma again and the mongoose slipped out of the noose and seized the python's neck, just below the head, and shook it daintily.

"Very good boxing match," said the Indian.

"No good," I said.

"It's disgusting," shouted a woman from the second floor of the hotel. "Why do you encourage such a thing?"

She seemed to be talking to me but I pretended not to hear. If she didn't like to look she could get away from the window. I wanted to see Rikki-tikki-tavvi fight a snake.

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The python by this time had gone completely to sleep and the mongoose was becoming slightly torpid itself. It had stopped shaking the python's head and merely crouched over it, holding it gently between its teeth.

"Very good boxing match," said the Indian. "You like see cobra too?"

"How much?" I asked.

"Just for lookings," he said. "You pay what you like."

He scooped up the python from the mongoose, which tried to hang on for a moment like a dog having a bone taken away from it. Slipping the python into the basket, the Indian, with what appeared to be the same gesture, plucked the cobra out. It was a disappointing cobra, very small.

"Very good boxing match," said the Indian. "Very good cobra. I leave cobra and mongoose alone together. Let them kill each other. You will see. Very good boxing match."

"It's disgusting," said the woman at the window. "Such things shouldn't be permitted."

"You see," said the Indian, and he gave the cobra a practice toss across the drive. It landed heavily and wriggled a bit.

The mongoose tried to run away but was jerked up on the end of its string with its feet scratching. The Indian got out his pipe and blew a jet of air up and down the back of the cobra. The snake lifted its head languidly and the neck began to swell. It was actually raising its hood and getting into fighting position.

I hurried to the room of Darrell Berrigan, the United Press reporter, and invited him to be my guest at the boxing match.

"A very good boxing match," I said, "between a mongoose and a cobra."

"How much?" he wanted to know.

"Just for lookings," I said.

"All right," said Mr. Berrigan.

When we got outside the cobra had fainted. It was stretched on the ground. Its neck had contracted to normal.

"Very good boxing match," said the Indian enthusiastically. "You will see. Look, look."

He played the jet of air up and down the snake's back, but it only stirred feebly.

"No good," I said.

The Indian began switching the snake, which half roused itself to get its head out of the dust and look around. The mongoose tried

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to get away. When he had the snake half awake the Indian stopped switching and suddenly snatched it and threw it at the mongoose, which ducked its head again. The snake landed on it and flipped free, going into the boxing position with its head up and the hood beginning to swell.

The mongoose crouched and sprang, catching the cobra behind the neck. The cobra collapsed and the mongoose shook it daintily between its teeth. The cobra went to sleep.

"Very good boxing match," said the Indian enthusiastically.

"It's disgusting," said the woman at the window.

"I've got to go back and do some writing," said Berrigan, without thanking me.

"Three rupees," said the Indian.

"Just for lookings," I said.

"No, sahib, no," said the Indian. "Very good boxing match."

"Just for lookings," I said, and gave him a half rupee.

CHAPTER XV

Troop Arrivals

One of the entertaining phenomena of war is the arrival of a troopship in a big town. It's especially good if the troops expected to be stationed in an entirely different country. Then they arrive as virgin sight-seers, their minds a great fresh blank on which first impressions can be vividly scribbled. After boning up a bit on Australia, they discover after all that they have docked in Bombay. With great equanimity they tackle the new situation, bursting on the apprehensive town with redoubled enthusiasm, especially if they have been cooped up a couple or three months. In four hours they're already at home; that is to say, they already hate the country thoroughly. No soldier can be said to be at home until he poisonously hates the country where he is stationed and is convinced that it is the dirtiest, most evil, most disagreeable piece of geography containing the most despicable population in the world. In a greater or lesser degree. I haven't been to England, Australia, or New Zealand as I write this. I'm talking of Oriental and African countries, where the natives use the sidewalks for latrines. That shocks our soldiers into complete repulsion, and although they later adapt themselves

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to this custom and begin to take advantage of it to some extent themselves, especially after dark, they never get over the initial conviction that they have been sent to a veritable pesthouse. In the first four hours they also manage to get themselves robbed buying souvenirs, which breeds further animosity. They discover they are paying three times as much for things as do the natives, and great bitterness and suspicion and homesickness drive deep into their bowels. They're apt to write a long, woebegone letter home that very night.

I remember particularly when a ship did come to Bombay after the troops had spent considerable time studying the geography and customs of Australia. The waste made them indignant. It set them against India right away.

Of course, in Bombay they didn't realize they were seeing the best of India. They thought they had been catapulted into a hell of filth and poverty and begging. The beggars in particular discouraged and angered them, for while the Americans are the most generous of peoples to beggars, they are the most irritated by them. They can't shrug them off like other peoples, ignoring them. They take the beggar's approach as a personal man-to-man encounter. If they turn him away they are haunted by the thought that if everybody did that where would the poor fellow be? On the other hand, they quickly discover they can't baksheesh every beggar. The upshot is they are disturbed and uneasy and either give the miserable, cringing specimen a coin or furiously drive him away.

So they felt horribly imposed upon in Bombay, although actually they saw nothing of big-league begging there. It was run-of-the-mill. There were no specials like the Rolling Beggar of Calcutta who goes everywhere by rolling. I told them about him. He rolls across intersections with or without the signal and sometimes he jayrolls in the middle of the block. He can roll right up and over a fairly high curbing.

All the time he is rolling he yells in a high-pitched piteous voice that he is suffering badly and can be relieved only by a contribution of a few annas, which seem to ease the pain temporarily. To garner in the coins he has an escort of two small boys and a woman, who also give him a push when he reaches a curb that is too high.

The soldiers heard this story suspiciously. They thought I was kidding them or showing off that I had been to Calcutta. What annoyed them as much as anything was that they didn't know where they were going next. They didn't even know where Calcutta was.

Their principal interests were getting to a bar and then to find a

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star-sapphire salesman, although most of them could only window-shop for the star sapphires. The Army had thoughtfully withheld their accumulated savings and doled out only five dollars each for spending money.

But that was enough for a beginning. It enabled the boys to see some cobras fight some mongooses, to get gypped on a rope trick or two, to buy a swagger stick to slap across their legs, to drink a couple of whiskies and ride in a carriage for a mile or two.

But it protected them from the star-sapphire salesmen, except for the lucky crapshooters who had garnered most of the loose change aboard.

This shipful, several thousand of them, came and went like a sort of hazy dream. Before lunch there weren't any. Suddenly the town swarmed with them. After dinner they were all gone again, herded back into the ship. It was better than the rope trick.

There was also a detachment of nurses, but they didn't last long. In eighteen hours they were riding a train to Poona, where I'd just finished covering the Gandhi fast.

I should have stayed there. I could have written three masterpieces. The first would have been about the committee of British officers' wives who had been organized to entertain the American nurses. You know Poona. Poona Poona. Very pukka-pukka.

The second would have been about the American nurses' reaction to the Poona Officers' Wives Committee. You know American nurses.

The third would have been about the reaction of the junior British officers to the dance which the Ladies' Committee was arranging for the visiting nurses. This much I can tell you, having been in on some of the preliminary arrangements: it was going to be a comedy of errors.

I didn't get much out of the nurses, as they were from Los Angeles, where a story I had written appeared in the *Times* with a description of some nurses arriving in Suez. Some of the nurses considered this an unfair description. It's an honest description of every nurse arrival I've seen. It fits them all and I'll give it to you, just as I wrote it in Suez.

The nurses were dreadful. They looked as though they came out of a comic strip.

Atop their heads they wore steel helmets, which were too big and fell over their eyes. The helmets were so big you could spin them on their heads.

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Over their shoulders they carried on straps about six different kinds of knapsacks and gas masks, canteens, mess kits, and other military costume jewelry of great usefulness, no doubt.

Some of them also carried baskets full of candy bars, cigarettes, toothpaste, curling irons, cookies, and shoe trees.

When they stripped themselves down to the comparative nudity of nothing but a uniform and maybe two or three odd mess kits and saddlebags, they were nearer to what we correspondents had hoped for when we made the long drive from Cairo to Suez to greet the first American nurses to arrive in the Middle East.

We even thought of inviting one or two to ride back to Cairo in our automobiles.

"You must ask the head nurse," we were told.

The head nurse peered at us over her spectacles and we began to drift away, whistling.

"I couldn't even go with you myself," she called after us suddenly.

CHAPTER XVI

Tiger Hunt

THERE WAS a shocking bad show about my tiger hunt, chaps. I didn't go on it. One damn thing after another all the time I was in India. First, a miserable tour of the Punjab took a couple of weeks when I might have been beating through the jungle. Then it was

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a week with American fliers which didn't come off well since my two best stories about going on a raid to Rangoon got lost in a shuffle of papers. Then up popped the Arakan campaign in Burma and I had to hike down there and hunt Japs instead of tigers. And next Mr. Gandhi went on his fast and I had to dash up to Poona, old boy, and I was thrown off the tiger scent once more. And finally my paper was about to shoot me off to China, so I went to Bob Stimson, assistant editor of the *Times* of India, and I said to him:

"See here, old boy. You've been on a tiger hunt, haven't you?"

"Yes, of course," he said. "Down at the Maharajah of Indore's. Good show, too."

"Be a good chap and let me write about it as if I'd killed the tiger. Been a shocking bad show about my hunt. Never got to go on it."

"Of course, old boy. Hop to it. Just use my hunt as if it were yours. You can say you shot the tiger."

Carry on, chaps. We're at the Maharajah of Indore's.

"And how do you like your bawth, sahib?" said the Maharajah's bearer in Oxford English.

"About eighty-five degrees," I said.

A silver stream spilled into the black glass bathtub. The black glass walls and the black glass floor became gently frosted with vapor. Then the vapor evaporated. The air conditioning had been turned on.

"Bath salts, sahib?" asked the bearer.

"No, thanks," I said, and then thought better and said, "Yes, yes, of course. What do you think?"

(I'll get to the tiger hunt later.)

The guests at the shoot assembled at eight in the glass and chrome cocktail bar, sitting on red leather stools before a gleaming array of imported bottles. I had a champagne cocktail and the Maharajah sat down beside me.

"Please do have another," he said when I had finished.

"Certainly," I said.

He's a nice young fellow.

"We'll begin tomorrow with a beat, I think," said the Maharajah. "It will give you a chance to get your shooting eye. Do have another."

"Certainly," I said.

"We'll ride out on elephants," said the Maharajah. "I think you'll find it quite amusing. Another?"

"Certainly," I said.

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"You have only a couple of seconds to shoot while the animal is bolting across the clearing," said the Maharajah. "It takes a snap shot. Another?"

"Certainly," I said.

I forgot what happened at dinner as I was thinking so much about the tiger hunt and the beat.

Next morning on three elephants the Maharajah and his house party rode to a cone-shaped hill up which wound a spiral path, cut through thick, low jungle. At the top we sat in a shooting box, which commanded a swath about thirty feet wide cut straight down the hill. The swath was the shooting gallery.

Below on the right the beaters began kicking up a racket, beating through the jungle and shouting. Suddenly a panther appeared at the edge of the clearing and hesitated. He looked quickly about and suddenly sprang into the open.

"Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack," went five rifles and the panther tumbled to the ground.

"I got him, I got him," I shouted.

"Shhhh, shhh," said the Maharajah. "You forgot to fire."

It was the champagne the night before. It slowed my reactions.

If you will excuse me now for a moment I will confer with Mr. Stimson and learn the etiquette on hunt.

"In the first place," says Mr. Stimson, "you never shout, 'I got him.' You turn to the gentleman next to you and you say, 'Splendid shot, old chap. My congratulations.' He will then turn to you and say: 'Not at all. It's absolutely your panther. My shot kicked up the dirt in front of him.' If there's a lady present, of course, all of you will say: 'Congratulations, my dear, on a remarkable shot.' You must observe these forms scrupulously."

A boar came dashing out into the clearing and five shots cracked out. I was a little slow and didn't pull the trigger until the boar had already collapsed.

"Crack," went my gun.

"Congratulations, old chap," said the gentleman to my left. "A splendid shot."

"Thanks," I said. "Did I get him?"

He looked tired.

At that instant a samba, or Indian elk, dashed across the clearing. I made a quick shot. The elk fell. I was the only man who shot.

"Do you always shoot female elk in America?" said the gentleman to my left.

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"It was just one of those things," I told him. "How do you tell a male from a female?"

"Look, old boy," he said, "one knows some things without asking, doesn't one?"

Other jungle animals dashed across the clearing from time to time, some of them falling victim to our fusillade. I was congratulated innumerable times by my fellow huntsmen and had an impressive bag by the end of the afternoon.

"Shall we go back?" said the gentleman on my left, finally, "before *somebody* shoots a beater?"

After a bath, tired but triumphant, we assembled in the bar.

"Champagne cocktail?" asked the Maharajah.

"Certainly," I said.

We'll get on with the tiger hunt tomorrow.

Meanwhile Mr. Stimson has been leaning over my shoulder and bothering me and making suggestions. He's just said to his bearer, Yusuf:

"Yusuf, spread the skin by the window and put the typewriter table and Mr. Treanor's chair on it. Perhaps he will gain inspiration. The story isn't going very well."

So Yusuf has laid out a magnificent skin of a male tiger with rich black markings and a magnificent ruff, and I'm sitting on it with my typewriter.

"Something interesting before you start writing," said Mr. Stimson, stooping by the tiger's head. "As soon as the tiger is dead you count the whiskers. They're supposed to be a deadly poison and if you aren't careful the villagers will steal them and put them in their mother-in-law's curry or something like that. Interesting, isn't it?"

"Who went on this hunt, you or me?" I said.

I am trying to discourage Mr. Stimson from taking too much credit for shooting this tiger. After all, I'm working up the story. He had the fun. But to get on with this writing on a tiger skin.

When I came down to breakfast rather late after the party in the air-conditioned palace the Maharajah offered me an alka-seltzer and said that the rest of the hunters had gone out to inspect a buffalo tethered with a chain to a tree as bait for the tiger.

"Come along," he said when I had finished a plate of kidneys and swallowed my coffee, "we'll drive out so you'll get the lay of the land."

We drove for ten miles through what they call jungle here, a

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choppy country fairly heavily wooded with low trees and tall shrubs and broken by clearings.

In the middle of a clearing the Maharajah's hunters had chained the buffalo. One hundred and twenty yards away was the blind, which is a carefully camouflaged trench with two openings through a screen for firing.

The members of the Maharajah's house party were called together while the sport was explained.

"Tonight," said the chief huntsman, "if we are lucky, the tiger will kill the buffalo. Tomorrow afternoon, you," he said, pointing to me, "will enter the blind at about four o'clock with your second shot."

(This second-shot business is humiliating. The Maharajah is going to put a Deadeye Dick in the blind with me to kill the tiger, if I don't. It's so unnecessary.)

"The tiger," continued the chief huntsman, "will have killed the buffalo the night before, will have ripped its throat and drunk its blood. Then, tired and thirsty, because a buffalo takes a bit of killing, he will go to the nearest water to get a drink. He will sleep through the day and shortly before sundown, if we are lucky, he will return to his kill. If he does not return you will remain in the blind throughout the night in the hope he will return at dawn."

"How about this second shot?" I said. "I've been mountain-lion hunting in Arizona without any second-shot business. Quite unnecessary."

"Did you see any mountain lion?" asked the chief huntsman.

"That's not the point," I said. "We didn't have good dogs."

"There is always a second shot in Indore," said the chief huntsman.

At luncheon, back in the air-conditioned palace, a snack of pheasant breast and a white Bordeaux, lightly chilled, the humiliating presence of the second shot was fully explained.

"It's only a precaution in case the impossible happens and you fail to kill the tiger," said the Maharajah soothingly. "A wounded tiger, handicapped in his hunt for wild game, usually turns to preying on the village cattle and even on the villagers. Many man hunters develop in this way. It's no lack of confidence in you. As you say, you are an old mountain-lion hunter and we know you will have no trouble."

As long as he put it that way it was all right with me.

During the afternoon, getting fit for the hunt, we had a bit of

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tennis and a swim, and during the evening we sharpened our eyes with champagne cocktails, one of the pleasantest features of a tiger hunt.

In the morning, when I came down to breakfast late, the Maharajah said:

"We had a bit of luck. The tiger killed the buffalo last night."

"How do you know it wasn't a panther?" I asked him.

"A panther kills a buffalo by ripping its stomach," said the Maharajah. "A tiger kills by attacking the hindquarters."

After luncheon, with my second shot and a bearer to drive the station wagon, I set out for the dead buffalo. We left the station wagon three quarters of a mile from the blind.

"Where are your sneakers?" said the second shot.

"I have no sneakers," I said.

He made me take off my shoes and walk in my socks. These tigers, it appears, can hear a twig snap at three miles.

We moved one step at a time, finally easing ourselves into the blind a little before four o'clock. The dead buffalo, its hindquarters torn by the tiger's claws and teeth, could be clearly seen through field glasses. One hundred yards away in a clump of trees sat at least a hundred and fifty vultures.

"Why don't the vultures eat the buffalo?" I asked.

"That is just what I am afraid of," said the second shot. "If the vultures come down they will eat the buffalo in four or five minutes."

"Why don't they come down?" I asked.

"The tiger is still in the neighborhood," said the second shot. "The vultures take so long to get off the ground that they don't dare come down while the tiger is close by. I have seen a tiger spring out and knock down five vultures before they could get into the air."

We spoke in the least possible whisper. Even then the second shot did not want to talk.

The tiger's hearing is so acute that it takes alarm at the least sound.

I have hay fever, however, and sneezed.

"My God!" said the second shot.

"It can't be helped," I said.

"The tiger will go," said the second shot.

I sneezed again.

"My *God!*" said the second shot. "Is this how you hunted mountain lions in Arizona?"

I sneezed four more times.

Suddenly all at once, by some sort of signal, the vultures flung

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There is no fact about China, it seems, which Professor Gee can't remember except facts which have to do about the Chinese Communists or other censorable affairs. On these subjects he has a memory like a mouse.

He has three college degrees and is a respected member of the Chinese information section, and yet he lives in a poverty that would be considered almost unspeakable in America. Even the ricksha coolies make more money than Professor Gee and members of his class, the miserable Chinese white-collar workers, who have been ground in the mill of inflation.

Professor Gee lived in a little mud shack just behind the Press Hostel, no more substantial than the shacks the poorest Mexicans have at home. His salary per month was probably not large enough to buy one pair of shoes. He kept himself and his family neat only by the most painstaking care of the few European clothes which he had saved from the wreckage of the Jap invasion. When those are finally gone beyond hope he will probably have to wear the coarse blue coolie cloth of the peasant. Or, to be more optimistic, perhaps the war will be over by then.

He was cheerful, always cheerful, and, apart from an undercurrent of sadness that the scholar in China has fallen to such a low estate, never disclosed his sense of personal tragedy. If I had to have an observer with me to see that I didn't ask about the Chinese Communists I am very content that it should have been Professor Gee.

I caused him a couple of bad moments by not knowing whom I was interviewing, especially when I mixed up the national secretary of the Kuomintang with the mayor of Chungking. This was a bad blunder. In the early part of the interview the national secretary of the Kuomintang said suddenly:

"You had better put such questions to the mayor of Chungking. Perhaps there is a confusion in your mind."

He'd hit the nail on the head. That was it. I sneaked a look at Professor Gee and he was perspiring with an absolutely expressionless face. Great drops were running down, but he never moved a muscle, nor did he blink. The mistake made him look bad because he was supposed to keep me straight on whom I was interviewing.

The national secretary took it well, however, and while I pulled myself together and tried to think of some appropriate questions he uncorked a story about some Japanese aviators which was a sensation. He was telling how they committed suicide near Shanghai five

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years ago rather than be captured. The suicide method violated all the purity rules. Absolutely unprintable.

"That will interest your people," said the national secretary.

"But I couldn't use that," I said.

"Oh yes," he said, "you have my permission to use the story."

"Can you print things like that in Chinese papers?" I asked.

"No trouble at all," said Professor Gee.

I still don't dare. We're a squeamish nation. It's all right, however, to tell the point of the story. The national secretary was pointing out the decline in Japanese morale. In the early days, when the morale was high, they would go to such lengths as the method he described for committing suicide rather than be captured.

"Now," he said, "we have motion pictures from the South Seas showing the Japanese surrendering to your troops without any attempt at suicide."

After a while Professor Gee's foot got so bad that he couldn't accompany me, and then I soloed but didn't get much. The Chinese are very careful talkers. It's different from India, where everybody is anxious to get his points in print. The Indians will spill themselves wide open, trying to sell their bill of goods, and the British likewise, and between the two you can at least get all the information you want, even if you can't add it up properly.

I also soloed off into Korean affairs in a great interview with a character named Refound Shin, a member of the Korean National Revolutionary party. It was a kind of musical-comedy interview but will give you an idea, perhaps, how twisted up everybody gets during a war, including the Koreans. At this period there was a great eruption going on in the Free Korean ranks in Chungking because Kim Ku had just been ousted as head of the Korean Independence party. You may have forgotten who Kim Ku is.

Kim Ku is the Korean who engineered the great Shirakawa bombing assassination in Shanghai in 1932 during the victory parade. It was during the first Japanese occupation of Shanghai.

Kim Ku didn't do the actual bombing. He assigned this dismal job to Yun Bong Kill, who is no longer here to tell the tale. You know what happened to Yun Bong.

When Shirakawa, the Japanese commander in chief, mounted the reviewing stand, Yun Bong darted up with a bomb in a thermos bottle or some such device.

"It might have been a bomb in a camera," said Refound. "I cannot quite remember what it was in, but it blew up Shirakawa completely

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and it blew a leg off Shigemitsu, the present Japanese Foreign Minister. The affair was a terrific success."

"Who else was killed?" I asked.

"Not important," said Refound. "Nobody ever heard of them."

Well, it was a great day for Kim Ku, who became a live hero while Yun Bong Kill became a dead hero. No slur on Kim Ku. He threw bombs in his day but there comes a time in a man's life when he takes up less strenuous activities. Kim Ku was pushing sixty at the time of the great Shirakawa success. He had gotten into the executive end of bombing.

Anyway, this is to put you in the Korean picture. This is the same Kim Ku who was ousted as head of the Korean Independence party.

With the aid of Refound Shin I worked three days to unravel the affairs of the Korean provisional government and finally succeeded to the point where I knew more about the Korean provisional government than I do about the Los Angeles city government.

Basically, the Korean situation was simple. Nobody recognized their provisional government.

This lack of recognition, according to Refound, who is a spectacled young fellow, was due in part to the general confusion of Korean affairs. Although there were only 300 Koreans in Chungking, they were all split up in different parties, going in different directions. Recently they'd been striving to present a united front.

The ousting of Kim Ku was a further step toward the Korean united front and possible recognition one day. Apparently Kim Ku had not been the ideal man for this job. Leaving out his other faults, he had failed all these years to solve the mysteries of the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Russian languages.

Refound not only instructed me about the local Korean political situation. He gave me the gossip about Korea itself, which the Japs were strenuously Japanizing.

Recently as a special favor they had offered all Koreans a promotion in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

"You can all have Japanese names," said the Japanese.

All a Korean had to do was go down to the local Jap official and say, "I want a Japanese name," and the officials would assign him one. The Koreans didn't come in fast enough so the Japanese made it automatic. All Koreans were promoted to a Japanese name, like it or lump it.

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Refound told me the Koreans were civilized before the Japanese. "We brought civilization to Japan," he said.

The Koreans have been regretting this ever since, although there was a period when they more than stood the Japanese off. In the sixteenth century they inflicted the only naval rout Japan has ever suffered, up to the present conflict, bewildering the Japanese fleet with an ironclad ship which had a cannon mounted on its poop deck.

These golden days are long gone, however. The Koreans have been conquered, their Emperor has been dethroned, and the Emperor's son is in Japan. Sorrowful story.

"What have they done with the Emperor's son?" I asked Refound.

Refound shook his head mournfully and said: "He's a Japanese general."

From what Refound told me I judge the Emperor's son is a bad type like the former Manchu Emperor, Mr. Henry Pu Yi, who is now the puppet Emperor of "Manchukuo."

Well, that was the Korean situation, according to Refound.

The Press Hostel made life either bearable or unbearable in Chungking, I could never decide which. It kept a man from becoming bored, but on the other hand it was a trying place. All the reporters in China lived there except for the Russians, who were probably too smart.

The hostel in its physical aspect consisted of a horseshoe of erratically constructed mud and bamboo rooms enclosing a small courtyard where bananas and corn grew and chickens, chicks, and ducklings scratched. The chambers, about 12 × 20 feet, had no rugs and each was lighted by a dim electric globe hanging by a cord from the ceiling. There were a bed with a straw mattress, a desk, two cheap wooden chairs, loose at the joints so they swayed flexibly forward and backward, a wooden washstand, and a crude chest of drawers. The windows were covered with cracked cellophane instead of glass, or with brown paper.

Coolies brought water for washing in a bowl, and when the journalist was finished washing he hurled the water out the door into the courtyard to irrigate the bananas and corn.

There were two bathtubs, but you couldn't take a bath in them because there was such a water shortage during certain times of day that they had to be used as reservoirs for flushing the toilets. Sometimes people would take baths anyway, but then they weren't allowed to let the water run out.

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These were just small inconveniences, however. It was generally agreed by the inhabitants that the real inconvenience was themselves. They tried one another's tempers. The personnel wasn't a scientific mixture. We had such things as a Dane married to a Chinese girl and working for an American news agency. He was in trouble at the time and has since gone to Mexico, I understand. Someone was blowing an automobile horn outside the hostel one night and woke the Dane's baby. In a fury he went out and struck the man, who, as bad luck would have it, was Chiang Kai-shek's son.

We had an Englishman married to a Russian and working for another American agency. There was the whole Chinese family of Newsreel Wong, complete with children who collected postage stamps.

There was an ex-drama critic for the New York *Times*, Brooks Atkinson, who had been remade into a war correspondent for the *Times*. (There was also an ex-society editor for the Los Angeles *Times* who was then the only Correspondent West of the Mississippi in Free China.)

There was a Tibetan explorer, if this can be considered a description of a person. His name was Harrison Forman.

There was a Baptist missionary who was temporarily or permanently, I don't know which, a broadcaster. He seemed to be a natural for the radio. You may have heard him on the early-morning Blue Network roundup, Leonard Allen.

There was a melancholy Pole who worked for some phase of the Chinese Government's information service. There was our bugler, Mr. Teddy White of *Time Magazine*, whom I considered the best-informed and ablest reporter in China, but he nullified this value with his bugling.

There was a White Russian lady reporter, Miss Sonia Tomara of the New York *Herald Tribune*.

There was an old China Coast reporter, born in one of the treaty ports, a man without a passport or even a nationality, I guess, although he was one of the most respected members of the hostel. Not that that meant much. He was Israel Epstein, who a few months earlier had established an all-time record as a work horse by covering Chungking for the United Press, the International News Service, the New York *Times*, and *Time Magazine*, as well as the Allied Labor News, his own service. All at the same time. This was when the regular correspondents were traveling about China, out of reach of the telegraph.

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There was Ernest Hauser, who wrote for the *Saturday Evening Post*. There were Frank Cancellare of Acme, Jack Jarrel of INS, Reilly O'Sullivan of Associated Press and our ducklings, roosters, dogs, and cats. Mix some of this with Chungking gin and you had yourself something. You don't have to stir it. It stirred itself.

CHAPTER XIX

Rome Raid

I WAS IN CAIRO, trying to reconcile myself with the Public Relations, which was not in a reconciling mood, when the landing was made in Sicily. The next morning I was on a plane flying west, twisting my fingers in anxiety to get to Algiers, be accredited, and get over to Sicily the next day. I was twisting my fingers unnecessarily. I might as well have relaxed. There were 113 reporters ahead of me on the priority list, and only a fraction of these had been allowed on the invasion.

Days later I was still twisting my fingers, trying to persuade my way into a more advantageous priority than 114th among 114 correspondents, using my old argument that I was the Only Correspondent West of the Mississippi Ever to Have Visited North Africa. The inoculation seemed to take somewhat, and a week later I was flown to Tunis as a first step to jumping across to Sicily.

The first afternoon in Tunis, in the company of Herbert Matthews of the New York *Times*, I went calling on Major Max Boyd of the Air Forces Public Relations. Major Boyd had something so hot on hand that he couldn't tell us about it, but he told Herbert to sit tight a couple of days and not be too anxious to get to Sicily. This was the first raid on Rome, although we didn't know it at the time. There was no mention of my going on this mysterious hot assignment, but the next day I went calling on Max again and mentioned to him that I had a blanket signed permission to go on any one (1) raid. Max didn't bite on this. But the next day he said it looked as though I would be able to go on the hot assignment. He still didn't say what it was. But it appeared there was an extra place and, although there were twenty or so correspondents around with a better priority, I was the only one who had provided himself with a blanket permission to go on any one (1) raid. By that time I had

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a notion it might be Rome and I began to feel faint because I knew something would happen to keep me from going on something so good. Only six correspondents were to be allowed in all, representing such institutions as the AP, UP, INS, Reuter's, and the New York *Times*. Then there was myself, representing the Los Angeles *Times*. I knew it would break down, and it did. That night Max came around and said I couldn't go.

The next morning Max came around and said maybe I could go because through some slip-up the Reuter's man's permission to go on a raid hadn't been received. That killed the Reuter's man, Nicholson.

"It's been telegraphed for," Max said to me. "It may come at the last minute and then, of course, you won't be able to go."

We were both killed at this point. A transport plane was to scatter us at the various bombing fields from which we were to take off for Rome, and Max said:

"Both of you better come out to the plane. If the wire doesn't get there in time Treanor goes; if it does get there Reuter's goes."

Half dead, the Reuter's man and I rode out to the airport. As usual, the transport wasn't quite ready to go, and we fiddled around and all of a sudden up came Paul Revere on a jeep with the Reuter's man's permission. I died.

My condition was so pitiful that Max suddenly reached a new decision.

"Hold the plane," he said. "I'm going to try and get this man aboard."

He spun off in the jeep and was gone three quarters of an hour. When he returned he had a document allowing one more man to go on the raid. He'd hornswoggled some general into signing it on the grounds that the Flying Fortresses would carry correspondents and the B-26s would carry one correspondent, but the B-25s had no correspondent assigned to them. I was unconscious from shock.

Somebody carried me into the transport and then somebody carried me off and nearly the next thing I remember when I came out of my deathlike trance I was standing under the wing of a B-25 saying to Second Lieutenant Neil G. Brosnan, of the Bronx, "Well, how do you feel about it?"

Neil's a Catholic. I'm not. I'm a mild Episcopalian.

"Well," he said, "it's just like somebody hiding behind a woman's skirt. We will pick around behind and get him without hurting the woman."

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"How about you?" I asked Private Arthur R. Colby, who would do the actual bombing. He's another Catholic, a Toledo boy.

"I feel just like everybody else," he said. "It's gotta be done. We're going to hit certain targets which have nothing to do with religion."

Two other Catholic members of our crew of six, Staff Sergeant Theodore Oates, of Verona, New Jersey, and Staff Sergeant George B. Alley, of Berkeley, Michigan, gave similar answers.

They knew there was no danger of hitting the Vatican, or even near it. They were instructed to bomb two airfields and two railroad yards, so why not?

Three hours later we were riding through the flak above Rome, jouncing and jolting from the concussions.

We came into the arena almost at the end of this heaviest concentrated daylight precision bombing of the war. Hundreds of Liberators and Flying Fortresses had already loosed their loads and we were the last ship of B-25s to go across.

So I was looking at Rome in the worst agony of the great daylight raid.

She looked curiously peaceful and undisturbed.

On the great horizon of airplane view the smoke and dust and flame which virtually blotted out the three target areas looked incidental. They weren't the first things you'd have noticed if you hadn't been looking for them. Probably first you'd have noticed the Tiber winding up from the sea. And then you'd have spotted the center of the city moving slowly toward you.

And then, without doubt, and with a shock, you'd have seen the great fire that was blazing with a smoky orange flame in the San Lorenzo railroad yards in the midst of a long curtain of smoke and dust torn from between the tracks and ties by the bombs of the B-17s.

And then, way off to the left, you'd have picked up some tall twisting and thinning columns of smoke in a long row, where the B-24s two hours before had crashed an ungodly load of dynamite on the Littorio landing field and railroad yards, which are adjacent.

Meanwhile I can assure you that you also would have been noticing some funny little tight black puffs which were dotting the atmosphere. That was the flak which knocks bombers out of the sky. But why worry? There's nothing to be done about that.

I looked for the Vatican and St. Peter's. I thought I was never going to find them, but all of a sudden, as faraway things often do when you're straining to see them, they popped out of the ground.

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There they were in the golden Roman sunshine, lovely and tranquil, far, far removed from the smoke of the three target areas. There was no sign of violence near them.

Then with the aid of my map I carefully checked the areas marked on our maps "not to be damaged." In none of these areas, which contain the most historic basilicas, did I see any smoke. (Later it appeared one basilica was hit.) Except for the people in them who were no doubt considerably agitated, they were undisturbed in their hoary and honorable antiquity.

With this bit of sight-seeing done, I had time to resume my nervous contemplation of the flak, which became alarming as we reached our target, the Ciampini Aerodrome, one of Italy's most important military fields.

Barely ahead and now almost straight below us, the field sparkled with the stabbing flashes of the heavy ack-ack, which were translated in a few seconds into ominous black puffs.

In the midst of these personal worries about the flak I had a slight twinge of worry about an old friend of mine from Los Angeles, Staff Sergeant Monty Montgomery, a former All-Year Club photographer who was sweating it out some twenty ships ahead doing army camera work. I wasn't able to worry about old Monty as hard as I expected since the flak got very thick. We were really being jounced. As Monty said before we left, "This is going to be a far cry from taking pictures of the wild flowers and the sun goddesses for the All-Year Club."

Damned if it wasn't! The thirty or so ships ahead were spilling their bombs out in quick succession, and then next to us the load was loosed and at the same time Colby snapped his switches and said into the interphone, "Bombs away, bombs away, all washed out." We wedged ourselves into the glass nose to get an underhand backward view.

Falling rapidly, the bombs kept pace momentarily and then streaked into invisibility, reappearing seconds later as part of flashes and smoke along the runway.

A shed or some kind of building broke in half. The bombs walked into what appeared to be a taxiing strip and then stopped. We cut sharp to the right and dived slightly in formation, shaking as Brosnan poured it to her, getting us away from the target and the ack-ack pronto.

As the coast rolled beneath us on the way out, shore batteries began glinting below and the air was again full of those miserable

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black puffs. Far to our right the P-38s were milling with some Axis bandits who had tried to bust into our formation. We began to curve violently in evasive tactics and at the same moment the ship trembled with the heavy-handed recoil of machine guns as the tail gunner, Staff Sergeant Fred Larse, of Bellingham, Washington, strafed at an innocent-looking fishing boat which had venomously and unexpectedly opened on us with ack-ack.

Then we were out of it, diving fast full bore, the engines grinding. To the left and right, beneath and above, were the B-25s and P-38s, sliding and curving as the formation regrouped for the long trek to Africa.

We leveled off a few hundred feet above the gorgeous bright blue Mediterranean with our copilot, Second Lieutenant Phil Ryan, of Evansville, Indiana, taking the controls, and then I got out my typewriter and found a stool in the radio compartment and began to write.

CHAPTER XX

Landing in Sicily

NOTHING, I SWEAR, could be as tense as a night landing behind the enemy lines. It was black as the inside of a witch's hat. The engine sounds ceased suddenly. Off that hostile shore our invasion ship began to roll stagnantly, while in her hot, blacked-out belly we sweated blindly. Then there was a commotion or a confusion and men were shouting. Two ghostly blue lights came softly on. For a few minutes we could see one another, an unreal vision of helmeted heads and rifles packed in queer amphibious barges. The lights went softly off and we waited restlessly in the fiercely hot darkness. Each man, I guess, with the same hard knot of fear in his stomach.

The cruel long minutes sweated by toward two-thirty in the morning—the hour of attack. Then this hour arrived and passed and we still waited, rolling slickly, in the darkness.

A soldier became seasick and retched interminably. Lights came softly on again and there was expectant turning of helmeted heads.

The lights went off and a grinding noise of dreadful finality began in the bow. A cool draft blew into the hold, and faint starlight appeared through the opening jaws of our ship.

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"Kick over your engines," shouted a voice.

There was a thrumming of many starters and the lead barge—or "duck," as they are called—rolled down the ramp on her wheels and went into the water with a splash.

Our barge followed next, then another, and then another, and we were swimming, with the engines making uncomfortably loud noises.

We swam in long circles in the cool mystery of the moonless night, waiting for our little flock to gather.

"They're all here, Colonel," a voice shouted, shockingly loud, across the water.

"Let's go, then," shouted Lieutenant Colonel Lyle Bernard.

With a noise like a flotilla of motorboats we headed determinedly for the profile of mountains, which was enemy-held shore and ten miles behind their lines.

Ahead, the first wave in its creeping silent barges should be beaching by now. By now we should hear vicious spurts of Jerry machine guns and see the fireworks of tracer bullets reaching for our men.

We heard nothing but the churning of engines. The coast remained black and mysterious, vaguely distant. We scarcely spoke. It was a trying time, when you could hardly think but were only a bundle of tenseness. Everything seemed fearful and sinister, even the refreshing night breeze playing over the Mediterranean. The stars seemed pitiless.

We drove on and on across the soft water, waiting and waiting for that first awful crackle of guns and the terrifying light of flares. There was nothing. There was still nothing when with an indescribable sensation our wheels touched the beach and we stopped swimming and began driving.

Then we were springing off in the sand. We huddled together whispering. All we could see was shapes. But we could hear everything. We could hear other men whispering and even calling in low voices. We could hear a tank grinding around just in front of us.

We could hear engines everywhere, in fact. It seemed the air was full of engine sounds. Then we were off in single file. I don't remember how it came about. I don't remember any command being given. All at once we were on the way, stumbling and scuffling and anything but stealthy. It seemed the whole countryside must know we were there. Still not a shot was fired. I was afraid we were coming into a trap. Just before reaching the railroad embankment we came to a tank. It squatted in the dark with the engine idling and there was a tremendous comfort in that heavy shape with its cheerful ex-

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haust noise. Twenty or so men were clustered around. I could see the tank's big gun and felt cheered up because our men were inside.

We made a dreadful noise climbing the embankment. Rocks rolled down, feet scrambled, guns and helmets clanked. We were as secret as a drunk, floundering upstairs at 2 A.M., dropping his shoes.

Everything seemed ominous. We came to a stone wall, pale in the starlight, and threaded our way between it and a stone barn. I think we were on a big estate. There were a number of large buildings among orchards. Every building seemed brooding and watchful. It was a nightmare feeling that something was waiting in the dark to kill us. This feeling would come and go. Sometimes there would be a feeling of encouragement because of the other men around us. The more shapes of men I could see the better I felt.

We were in a lemon orchard. The orchard was full of men. You could hear them everywhere. When we came to the coast military road we stopped again. It was flanked by a stone wall. Many men were crouched there. I joined them and heard a car coming. I remember hearing it coming but I didn't pay attention to it. It seemed to be somehow outside the show. It didn't seem to count. Everyone must have felt that way because the car passed and no one spoke or shot. But it started the wheels going around in our heads. When the next car came I could hear the men getting their guns ready. They were getting ready to fire at it from both sides of the road. I flattened out so I wouldn't get hit.

It was a terrible interval waiting for this man or men to come along and get killed before they knew what had happened to them. The car came very slowly and was just opposite when we opened fire with rifles and machine guns. The orchard was briefly full of bright buzzing tracers and the mystery of the night was broken open by the smacking of the guns.

Then the guns stopped and I could hear the car going down the road, picking up speed. A hundred yards from us it ran into another fusillade and survived that. I don't know how it ever got through. I felt sort of relieved that it had escaped, although you're not supposed to feel that way about the enemy. I was not deliberately thinking I was glad. I was just feeling relieved.

Somebody shouted, "Get the God damned bazooka working on these bastards. Where is it?"

There was a shout from up the hill on the other side of the road from the bazooka man. Before he could get set up a motorcycle

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came around the curve moving fast and ran into a blast of twenty or so guns at point-blank range, firing into each other from across the road. I don't know how none of us was hit. There was a skidding squeal and a crash and then a stricken voice shouting again and again. Each cry was a little weaker than the last until there was silence.

Then we heard a truck rumbling toward us and the voice that had called for the bazooka shouted: "Now get this bastard."

The guns smacked into action and then there was a roar as the bazooka artist walloped the truck from close range. There was a stunning explosion and concussion on the road just above where I crouched behind the wall. Flame shot through a stone porthole in the wall just before my eyes. I took off and bumped into a tree limb and fell panting. The truck was burning and lit the orchard and the hillside across the road in a garish and terrifying glare. I could see men nervously moving about the orchard with their rifles in their hands. Two other vehicles came by and we blew them up. They apparently thought the fire came from their own troops. Somebody jumped out of one car and we heard his footsteps running down the road. There were shouts and yells. "There he goes. Hit the bastard." Guns rattled and tracers flashed and there was silence. There were no more running footsteps.

Headquarters company, to which I was attached, hurried across the road to go up the hill and get out of the light of the burning truck. Other companies fanned out up other hills to take up protective positions screening our tanks and guns and machine-gun companies, which were to remain on the flat, to block the German retreat, to close the back door on that stubborn, tough, but defeated enemy army. That was our mission.

On the other side of the road we started climbing a bushy hill so steep we had to go on all fours. I lost my company. Everybody seemed to have lost his company. Fifty men asked me where their company was and I asked them back where mine was. Everybody said to keep going up the hill.

A machine gun three quarters of a mile back in the hills began spitting our way, the first enemy fire. He shot high, his tracers arching overhead and continuing out to sea, casting bright moving chains of reflections on the black water.

A flare suddenly hung in the sky and we were lying in dazzling light, hugging the steep hillside. A sniper's bullet seemed to zing just past my ear. It had that spent, vicious whizzing sound of a bullet

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fired from a long distance away, more frightening than the sharp crack of a close shot. Half a dozen more whipped across, and I could tell by the grumbled comments that each man seemed to think they were zipping just past his ear.

The flare burned out unexpectedly soon and we began scrambling for the lee side of the hill. The sniper kept burning them in through the blackness. When the flare went out and I had gotten to the safe side of the hill the spell of mystery and tension was broken. Everything seemed normal again and I lay on the steep slope and took a rest. Other flares went up but we weren't much bothered by fire in our section. In other quarters machine guns were beginning to hammer, and occasionally a loud, angry American voice shouted an order. Below us we heard tanks and caterpillar guns struggling to climb the railway embankment or churning in the lemon groves, finding positions to command the coast road along which the Germans would flee. We climbed on, gasping and sweating, pushing ourselves too hard from excitement. The mountain rose maddeningly from summit to summit. Everywhere lay panting soldiers, burdened with guns, radios, and other equipment, all asking each other, "Where is such-and-such company?" A tired dawn was just breaking when we reached the top, where a decrepit olive grove offered shelter. Here Colonel Bernard and Major Lynn Fargo, of Milwaukee, decided to set up headquarters for the invasion force, part of the 3rd Division.

It was like setting up housekeeping.

Everybody found himself a spot for a slit trench under an olive tree or in the brush and began digging. Or they were working on the telephone or the radio. It was busy and cheerful.

We'd rest and take a drink from our canteens. The occasional chatter of machine guns didn't seem menacing. Everything was going so well we were jubilant.

In the middle of the morning we took a light shelling. But it didn't seem bad, not compared to what we'd expected. We ducked in our slit trenches and waited. The shells didn't come in flurries, but just from time to time.

One of them set fire to the grass under the olive trees. Enough wind was blowing to drive the blaze briskly forward, and the smoke got in our eyes and noses and became a little alarming.

"Put that fire out," shouted a soldier.

A couple of shells smashed in among us and everybody stayed in his slit trench. The fire was gaining momentum quite rapidly.

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"Put that fire out," shouted half a dozen angry voices.

Nobody put it out. It just grew and men were jumping up from their slit trenches as it crackled forward and jumping on top of other men in their slit trenches while all over the hill the shouts grew louder and angrier: "Put that fire out!" Everybody shouting for somebody else to put it out. But the shells kept coming over and nobody ever did put it out. It just burned out.

We brought a couple of dozen mules ashore with us. We brought a little of everything, it seemed, except food and water. The general idea was that the rest of the Army would bust through and save us before we got hungry and thirsty. This was overoptimistic.

As to the mules—they were to carry ammunition and had a pretty hard life. They don't know when to duck. In proportion to the human casualties, the mule casualties were sadly high.

I remember one mule coming over the rise, led by Private T. J. Chandler, the bazooka artist who had blown up the truck. They halted on the sky line right in the middle of a sniping flurry. Bullets were whizzing every couple of seconds but the mule just twitched his ears and switched his tail as though they were a new kind of fly.

Private Chandler behaved as ignorantly, standing there holding the mule's rope. Men were shouting at him but he seemed oblivious. I think he was a little dazed from his bazooka gun. He nearly blew himself up with the concussion and was wounded all over with small shrapnel.

I don't know what he was doing with this mule either. It was none of his work, but he was standing there holding its rope, oblivious to the bullets, until somebody screamed so loudly that he couldn't miss it: "Get off that God damned sky line. They're sniping."

A couple of close ones sang by him and the bazooka chap was suddenly galvanized into action. He ran around behind the mule, gave it a kick, and then fell flat on his face, dropping the rope.

The mule was so astonished it didn't move until another soldier raised out of his slit trench and waved his arms wildly, making queer noises. Then the mule trotted slowly off, twitching his ears and switching his tail at the new kind of flies that were buzzing around in the Sicilian mountains.

We had one sniper on our own hill whom we didn't knock out until he'd shot about twenty men. He had plenty of guts. He took up a post in an old house that commanded a portion of our olive grove. From time to time he would wound or scare a man but we thought he was just one of the many snipers on the hill opposite.

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He began shooting a little too often, however, and finally snapped in a few along a trajectory that would have been impossible from the opposite hill.

We sent some men out after him. He got three of them before they got him.

It became very quiet. Almost the only sound apart from our own voices, now very cheerful, was the busy strumming of tank engines on the flat. While we had been digging ourselves in atop the hill they had been getting set below to blast any Germans who tried to escape down the road. The radios were working splendidly. Our artillery observers were in position to direct fire. The objective had been accomplished with incredible ease. We had definitely put in the stopper.

The German Army was trapped between our Seventh Army and ourselves. If we could keep the stopper in the bottle a large German force would be in the bag.

About noon our luck began to change. The Germans started plastering us with mortar, starting another brush fire, which burned out nearly a half mile of telephone wire.

Our small radio for communicating with the flat chose the same period to fold, and for more than an hour we were out of communication with the people below us. The Germans began heaving in equipment from both sides and our communications were so harassed that it was impossible to direct gunfire efficiently.

By the time we had communications re-established the enemy had a heavy force of tanks behind a turn on the road protected from our gunfire. A golden opportunity to knock out the tanks while they were traveling down the road had been lost.

At the same time the Germans began working on our tanks and artillery with fire from their 88s and also began shelling our olive grove, driving us to ground.

At this point a message got through the flat to our mountaintop from Lieutenant James L. Osgard.

"Man," he said on the radio to Colonel Bernard, "we won't last five more minutes."

"In five minutes," said the lieutenant colonel, "you're going to get help from the Navy."

That was one of the longest five minutes of my life, and for Lieutenant Osgard and his platoon on the flat it must have been longer than the condemned man's last hour.

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The Germans had been forming for the past hour and for the past hour we had been imploring the Navy to bail us out. The Navy was steaming as fast as it could and had just radioed that its batteries were readying the first salvo.

The minutes ticked and loitered, and on the flat we could hear the machine guns beginning to rattle as the Germans shoved in.

Then, far to sea, timed as beautifully as a cheap movie rescue, we heard the weighty grumble of the cruiser's guns, and a second or two later the shells shrieked in like a subway express. I've never heard anything like it.

On the nose of our hill, where fifty or so of us gathered to see the show, ignoring snipers who were probably also all eyes for the Navy, nearly every man instinctively flinched as this weight of screaming explosive blasted in.

It fell short into the sea off the German position, tossing up a series of simultaneous spouts, somewhat smaller than we had anticipated. While we were jabbering and pointing another train of shells came shrieking across and landed in the water fifty yards closer in.

The next salvo overshot and landed out of sight along the side of our mountain, which trembled at the concussion. From then on the shells pounded into the town of Brolo, where the Germans were hiding with their tanks and men. A hideous crashing came at the end of each screaming whistle.

Through most of it one German machine gun persistently and maddeningly kept sputtering at our troops. Then came a tremendous crash and explosion and the machine gun stopped. After a few more salvos the Navy wound it up.

Colonel Bernard got Lieutenant Osgard on the radio and said: "How did you like it?"

"It was a damn good birthday party," said the lieutenant.

We had a small celebration on our hilltop. There was a delightful quiet. Not a gun was firing. Not a sound was coming from the Germans in Brolo. The Navy had knocked out that attack. For the time being we had breathing space.

I took this interval to try for water, carrying canteens for the entire press party consisting of Don Whitehead, Associated Press; Jack Belden, *Time;* and Homer Bigart, New York *Herald Tribune*. Half a mile behind our command post a trickle from a spout had attracted our soldiers like flypaper attracts flies. When I got there at least thirty men, carrying an average of seven canteens each, were clustered around. Each canteen took about five minutes to fill. I asked

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a man at the head of the line how long he'd been there. "Five hours," he said.

That was too much for me. I filled my canteen from a slimy hole into which the spring had drained. It was awful-looking and awful-smelling. I had to brush aside scum to get my canteen into the

water, which was full of wrigglers. But it tasted good and I sat in the shade of an olive tree to enjoy it. Coming out of the canteen, it didn't seem so dirty as if I'd bent down and drunk straight from the hole.

Meanwhile the cluster of men around the spring kept growing. Every officer who passed would drive them off, muttering dire warnings about snipers and mortars. As soon as he'd gotten out of sight the men would rush back to get their places.

Then the dive bombers came and really dispersed us. They didn't strike at the spring, however, but a half mile forward at the hilltop, where the command post was located. Two bombs came screeching into the grove where my slit trench was located. At the same time the field telephone for G Company rang and Lieutenant Warren

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Simmons, of San Francisco, the executive officer, answered. A moment later he shouted the order to his men:

"The enemy is counterattacking. Don't shoot any men who come out of that olive grove ahead. They'll be ours retreating."

The machine guns were already making their nasty rattling.

When Lieutenant Simmons issued this order not to shoot at our men coming over the hill I hit my flattest spot of the day.

The enemy had gathered its forces for another attack and we could hear a terrific cannonading on the flat below. I knew we were running out of ammunition and we had always been out of food and water, and finally the Army which was supposed to rescue us was still miles away. We could hear their guns, but they were far behind a series of hazy ridges.

"Are we in the bag?" I asked Lieutenant Simmons.

"We'll have to hold out," he said determinedly.

He said it so determinedly that I felt encouraged. Meanwhile, despite the critical situation, the soldiers were still clustering at the water hole, desperately trying to fill their canteens. They were immune to any thought except to get a drink. Simmons and other officers shouted at them time and again to get back to their units and stop making themselves such a pretty target.

They'd creep away and in five minutes they'd creep back. Simmons would notice them again and shout and they'd creep away a hundred yards. Then they'd creep back again.

Then the enemy dropped a few mortars in our vicinity and the men scattered of their own accord, except for the first five at the head of the line. They'd have been blown up before they'd have lost their places. They flattened out right where they were while the man at the head of the line carefully kept the mouth of his canteen under the pathetic dribble which was our only water supply. As soon as the mortaring stopped forty other men came creeping back to get their places. It was a study in what thirst does to men. I returned to the olive grove as the counterattack up the hill was beaten back, but we were still surrounded. Behind us the hammering of our artillery seemed to grow somewhat louder, and on the next ridge over we could see our shells exploding on the German positions.

But every time we fired a shot our ammunition supply was cut down. Many men were already walking around with empty rifles, asking for cartridges.

Our mortars were down to twenty-two shells. Replenishment of

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any ammunition was impossible because the ducks which carried our ammunition had scrammed off to sea.

This was an incredible sight. Someone shouted that the ducks were taking off, and we went to the brow of our hill and sure enough they were. They'd waddled down the beach into the water and were making for safety as fast as they could go. The Germans threw a few shells after them but they got away.

On the hill we cursed them for every kind of rascal. That ended for good our hopes of more ammunition. The plans we had for court-martialing them would have chilled their blood. But it turned out they were justified. An officer, calculating that they would be cut off by the Germans in any case, had ordered them out. But we didn't know that. All we knew was that they were gone.

And all we could do was pray Jerry wouldn't counterattack again, while we listened to the slow advance of our artillery. Just before sunset the situation was brightened when shells began whistling overhead and landing in the German positions at the base of our hill.

They were American shells. That meant, at least, that our guns had advanced far enough to give us artillery support. It also meant that our infantry, which would be miles ahead of the guns, must be just around the bend of Cape Orlando. Not long after dark an observer reported to Colonel Bernard that he was certain he had identified the slow beat of an American machine gun on Cape Orlando.

That cheered us. On the road below we could hear the German traffic streaming through in rapid retreat. This was a saddening sound. We had been landed to cut off this retreat and trap the remains of the German Army. As the colonel said, we'd put the stopper in the bottle but the Germans had blown it out again.

We took little comfort until we heard that American machine gun on Cape Orlando.

"Man," said the colonel, when the observer reported hearing the gun, "this is a historic moment for us."

When the Germans hadn't counterattacked again by midnight we felt reasonably certain they were satisfied to leave well enough alone. So long as they'd knocked out our artillery and tanks, which had blocked the road, they apparently didn't give much of a damn about us on their hilltop.

We went to sleep confident of rescue in the morning. At dawn an observer reported to Colonel Bernard that he had seen an American jeep on the road below.

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"Copacett," everyone was shouting when we heard that an American jeep was on the road below us.

No one could explain the why of this "Copacett," not even Major Fargo, who introduced the word some months ago. It was just something he thought up one day to mean "Everything under control." The whole battalion had picked it up. As soon as we heard the jeep was below we knew we were rescued and everyone began shouting, "Copacett."

The colonel headed a party to go down the hill and make the first meeting with our forces. It was just dawn, a perfect cool morning before a hot day with a curling mist hugging the Mediterranean and twisting among the seaside orchards.

We scrambled down our rugged mountain hill while the colonel sang or attempted to sing:

"The cavalry, the artillery, the dirty engineers,
They'll never beat the infantry in a hundred million years."

The colonel was feeling fine. We were all feeling fine, as a matter of fact, not even tired, not even hungry, and not so very thirsty. Just wonderful was all we were feeling.

We hailed a jeep at the base of the hill and were met by another colonel, who shook our colonel's hand as though he were greeting a man from the grave.

"Listen, kid," he said, "I want to tell you that your boys are pretty good but some of my boys are pretty good too. They could hardly walk after fighting all day yesterday but I told them they had to keep fighting and walking all night to save your outfit and they did."

Our colonel thanked him like mad and allowed everybody's boys were pretty good. Then a general came along and there were more congratulations. The general told our colonel to prepare a list of men who deserved immediate promotion for conduct in battle. The colonel had them right on the tip of his tongue and rattled them off while the general smiled and said to put them on paper later in the day.

He told the colonel he'd get him a D.S.C., too, but the colonel said the D.S.C. should go to the battalion instead of to the individual. The general smiled again and said:

"Well, we'll see."

We didn't feel so cheerful when we walked around and had a look. It was a bad sight. The dead look so pitiful and always so unexpected, lying under a lemon tree where you would never think

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to see a dead man; or sprawled stiffly, helmet still on, in the ditch beside the road; in a farmhouse doorway, half sitting up; crushed in a blackened tank, barely visible where a plate has been sprung open. The victory in Sicily reads more easily than it was fought. As General Patton said when he arrived a half hour later:

"We've been beating the best soldiers in the world."

Well, the dead are dead, and except to give them a salute and farewell, we didn't brood over them. Nobody can help the dead with tears or praise or monuments. They belong with all the billions who have died in the millions of generations before. We who are living are in the minority, still struggling.

The Germans had retreated too fast to bother mopping up the flat. The doctors in the aid station under a railway culvert reported hearing German voices but said they were never visited.

An impressive sight was two burned-out tanks, one American, one German, facing each other at about seventy-five yards. The American had taken up a position commanding a turn on the road. The German had come waddling around. They'd let go at the same moment, blowing each other up. One soldier who'd seen it said some of the American crew had been able to jump for safety before their tank burned. The Germans hadn't.

General Patton's arrival was the last event of the morning. Standing in a command car, taking salutes, he drove through the flat, snapping pictures with a miniature camera.

There's a sort of side story about the invasion which I couldn't work into the main narrative. That was about my German prisoner who was with me most of the day. He wasn't exactly my prisoner, as I didn't capture him. But I took him over. I hired him, in fact. According to the Geneva convention, if you put a prisoner to work you must pay him. So I put him on the pay roll for the day and had him dig me that slit trench.

He was the cream of the first eight prisoners we took. They were all eight sleeping under one blanket on Mount Brolo when Private First Class Edward Krzewinski, of Milwaukee, and some other enlisted men stumbled over them in the dim gray light of dawn a couple of hours after we had made the landing behind the lines. The Germans woke up suddenly, and in Krzewinski's words:

"They didn't say a damn thing but they all looked so excited, like they didn't know what to do. Then they started tossing their pistols at us and we marched them back to the command post."

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When the prisoners arrived at the command post everyone was too busy to pay them attention, except me. Apart from worrying, I had nothing whatsoever to do. One other thing: I had a slit trench to dig.

But the soil of this hilltop olive grove was flinty. After a few strokes with a trenching tool I could see that I am truly nothing but a white-collar worker. As a soldier I wrote myself off right then and began to contrive some way to get the slit trench dug by somebody else.

It was then that the prisoners arrived and I decided to hire one to dig the trench. I looked them over carefully and settled on a well-built fellow of about my own age. The other seven were more or less clods, just more German soldiers. But this fellow had an intelligent, handsome face. He had black hair, gray eyes, and skin that tanned to not much color at all, just a parchment shade.

In fact, he looked so high-class I was sure he would speak English, although this proved to be an error. He spoke nothing but German, making conversation—my objective—difficult.

However, he was great on digging a slit trench. As you do with prisoners, I spoke to him curtly and pointed to the tools. He took the little pick with a nice smile and started digging hard. One thing you will notice about prisoners is that they are remarkably polite and willing.

When he had finished I curtly told him, "Thank you," and ordered him to sit down. You're expected to be a little abrupt with prisoners, since their comrades, who are just like them, are over the way planning to kill you.

Well, the conversation didn't get anywhere because German was the only subject I failed in at college, but as we sat looking at one another a shell whistled over and landed down the hill. Another followed and landed closer. I sat in the slit trench and prepared to duck.

My prisoner gave me a questioning look and then another questioning look at the trench and lifted his eyebrows a bit as if to say: "How about me?"

It was pretty hard to turn him down, since he'd dug the trench, so I drew my knees up and huddled in one end while he did the same at the other. This left both our heads sticking up. When the brief shelling had finished I curtly ordered him to dig the trench deeper and longer.

He went to work violently and soon had a trench long enough for two, crouching at opposite ends.

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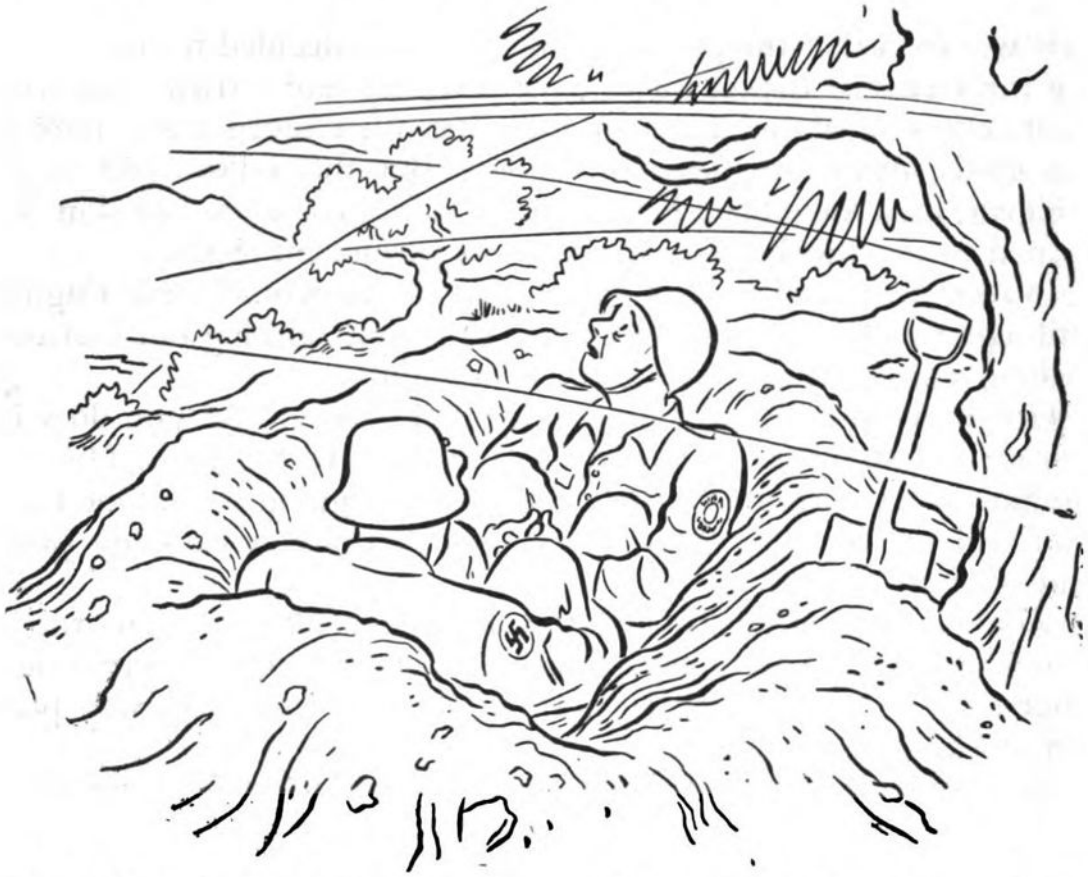
"Good," I said sharply, using my special tone for prisoners. "You can rest now."

So we sat like that most of the day, facing one another in the slit trench, and it had a good effect on my behavior. When we had an occasional shelling I didn't duck in my usual terrified way but lowered my head gently and smiled at the German to show that this was all in a day's work to me. He operated on the same prin-



ciple. We were probably the two coolest-appearing men for twenty or thirty yards around.

About noon a change in our relationship began to take place. Our Army had not pushed through to relieve us. We were in danger of being cut off.

"Have a cigarette," I said to the prisoner, no longer using my curt, sharp tone.

One of our soldiers, peering out of his slit trench, saw this gift and shouted hilariously:

"You'd better be good to him. You'll probably be digging his slit trench tomorrow."

Nothing was closer to my mind. I opened my K rations and gave

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him a biscuit. He ate about half of it and threw the rest away. All soldiers do this with K ration biscuits, which are so injected with vitamins that they taste chemical.

Then I began to ask him with signs and a couple of words about his family, and he produced a picture of his wife and two children, cute little brats dressed in snow costumes. This was about three o'clock, when we were definitely in danger of being wiped out or captured. So I admired his children extravagantly. He seemed very pleased and took out some more pictures of them.

About five o'clock the Germans smashed through our lines on the flat, knocking out our tanks and artillery and surrounding us completely. At the same time they began a sharp counterattack up our hill, and I really went to work on my prisoner. I gave him the next to last sip from my canteen when I was so thirsty I would have given fifty dollars for a Coca-Cola. He thanked me terrifically, as he knew we were completely out of water. We all had our tongues hanging out.

The last little taste of water, however, fired me with such a thirst that I walked half a mile to the so-called spring.

It was while I was there that our hilltop was bombed, and when I got back I found that both my prisoner and I had been evicted from our slit trench for a concussion-shocked man, who, incidentally, was another German prisoner.

My man was sitting with the other prisoners, and that was about the last I saw of him. However, as a final good-will gesture, I threw him a whole pack of cigarettes and gave him a good gulp of my slimy water, since our side was practically out of ammunition and one more counterattack would have had us all in the bag.

I tell you all this to prove that I am a Christian man, a great follower of the precept, "Do unto others as you would be done unto."

CHAPTER XXI

Three Sicilian Sketches

I A BATTLE BEGINS

WATCHING A BATTLE from an artillery observation post stirs the emotions similarly to watching a game of checkers.

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In the field glasses the combat men seem to suffer neither fear nor pain nor death.

It's a comforting way to watch a battle. The very lingo of the artillery observers crouching with their field glasses or their telephones heightens the effect of an abstract operation without the agony.

"Abel on the way," calls the sergeant at the phone, if his observer is busy with the glasses.

"Abel on the way," the observer repeats to show he heard through the welter of other calls in the observation post.

"Abel" means "A" Battery just as "Baker" means "B" Battery and "Charley" means "C" Battery.

Immediately the leisurely whistle of Abel's shells sounds overhead, and a few moments later on the hillside a mile opposite appears a series of small puffs with orange flashes at their centers. The flashes die in an instant and the smoke slowly billows outward and upward, and then after an interval of unreal length, seemingly disconnected with the explosions, come the smashing concussions, "Wham, wham, wham, wham."

The noise seems the only violence, and it is gone with long rolling, dying echoes as the observer singsongs the words, "Abel 570 left, 30 over."

"Abel 570 left, 30 over," singsongs the sergeant in almost the identical voice, his words half lost in the chant of other men calling, "Baker on the way," or "Charley range correct, Charley range correct. Did you get that? Charley range correct. O.K." While another man on another telephone is listening and concludes the conversation by saying, "Roger," a technical radio word which has come into general slightly distorted use meaning, more or less, "O.K. I've got it. It will be done." "Roger," they say and ring off.

The battle began on Mount Fratello a mile across the valley at first light of morning. There'd been a long period of lingo on the half-dozen phones while the little clan of observers at this post got their batteries ready and then turned them loose by synchronized watches just as Mount Fratello emerged from indistinct obscurity into the sharp outlines of dawn light.

The eager guns coughed up their shells in a thundering bedlam, the men at the telephone were calling, "Abel on the way," "Baker on the way," "Charley on the way," there was a confused endless whistling overhead—then on the flat face of Fratello great chemical fires of brilliant intensity flared and were almost instantly smothered

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in their own dense white smoke of white phosphorus, a choking screen which blinded the enemy to our troops' advance.

Mixing the phosphorus with high explosive, the artillery tattooed the mighty battlement until Fratello's mile-long flat-topped face was confused with a great chemical cloud which slowly blew out to sea.

Then the long strung-out files of American infantry walked coolly across the broad sandy wash at the mountain's base and scrambled up the banks in scattered bands, taking cover behind stone walls, in vineyards, olive groves, and tough brushy waste land.

The first German squeezed his trigger and the first incredibly rapid, almost liquid squirt of machine-gun bullets whipped through the smoke-shrouded landscape. The battle had begun. A few minutes later the alert, breathless bursts of the German machine gun were broken by a heavier, much slower "knock, knock, knock" of an American gun, far longer prolonged.

The battle settled into a rhythm of infantry advance, of quick repelling bursts of German gun posts, then of artillery smashes at the German gun posts.

Or sometimes neither the infantry nor the artillery cleaned out the German but he stayed, holding off the attacker with those smooth, short liquid bursts almost like the squirt of a water pistol. The fight didn't move fast. It was deliberate. And, after the first excitement, monotonous. Straining through the field glasses, you could watch the Americans crouched behind a bush or a wall for minutes at a time until your eyes ached. Nothing would happen. They wouldn't move. They wouldn't fire a shot. Or perhaps, bending low, they would slip along behind a stone wall and take up a new crouching position at a corner.

The Germans, for my own part, I never saw, and to tell the truth all day long I never saw an American fire a gun, although the easily distinguishable heavy "knock, knock, knock" of our machine guns broke into the thunder of artillery at frequent intervals.

But I didn't look much through the glasses. It was too hard on the eyes, watching for long minutes at a stretch until your hands obstinately trembled through fatigue and blurred the vision. It was tiring to everyone.

At frequent intervals the observers changed off and took naps. Even the walloping of guns became almost soothing. I slept for an hour once and when I woke it was nine o'clock in the morning and the position was about the same as before.

The monotony was broken once about midmorning when the

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Navy cut loose from far at sea with a series of deep-throated bellows and plowed salvos of huge shells into the far side of Fratello.

Except for his machine guns the German was quiet. His artillery never answered during the first hours. The heavy racket was all made by our guns as they played a mathematical game of range and deflection on the mountainside in front of us, knocking up an olive grove or a patch of brush or a seam of rock in a rough search for a troublesome Jerry.

On our hillside the brush hummed with insects, there was an occasional flicker of birds' wings, there was the monotonous singsong of the artillery observers, and there were cat naps while the battle wore slowly on, hard to see and almost impossible to analyze.

II THE BATTLE CONTINUES

At least one man had just been killed in our midst and was lying up in the brush.

Several more had received minor wounds and were nursing themselves down the hill with that surprised and relieved expression which follows the discovery that they're alive after being hit.

The dust was hanging in the motionless air and the sharp smell of burned powder was still in our nostrils as we assembled from our various hiding places and in grave tones began to assess the damage. Then in a loud voice Private Harold J. Mason, of Clinton, Massachusetts, began reading from a letter he had just received from Miss Edith E. Folia, also of Clinton:

" 'Harold,' " he shouted, reading from the letter, " 'I have been seeing in the paper where the American troops are fighting in Sicily. *I have a feeling you are there.*' "

That was all we needed to break the tension. We laughed until we cried, and we shouted over and over again:

"She has a feeling Harold is there. So she's got a feeling he is there. Well, Harold's got a feeling he is there, too."

Maybe it wasn't even funny. But a laugh had to come for 90 per cent of the terrified men. Until they'd found something to laugh at they couldn't ease back to normal.

The other 10 per cent, after they've been scared, usually become angry. They snap out orders and remarks. They become formal and unapproachable, playing the fighting machine instead of the human being. A fighting machine can't become scared, can it? Therefore by inference this man couldn't have been scared.

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But by nine times the greater number prefer to laugh, especially at themselves. They might as well. It's no use trying to fool anybody that you're the respectable masters of your situations which you appear under ordinary circumstances.

Fear and the urgency of the moment strip off the pretense and the front, all the dignity which a man builds up. He becomes another rabbit, scurrying for cover, instead of the tiger he plays with in his fancy. The shelling we got on this afternoon on our observation post provided a great study of tigers become rabbits.

We'd been sitting there on our crest, so beautifully insulated from the battle on the hill across the valley. Every development which we thought we could distinguish in the general confusion was analyzed in soldierly fashion. We took our setbacks across the way without flinching. We never became rattled, no matter how hard the going became for the boys over there.

Unexpectedly, "whee-boom," a shell landed no more than forty feet from us before we had a chance to duck. Dust and concussion were all around us, pebbles were dancing off our clothes, and we began making the almost instantaneous transition from tigers to rabbits.

In another split second we former tigers were streaking in seventeen directions for trenches and other shelter. I'd long ago made my plans and put them into execution with a beautiful rapidity. Instead of going over the brow of the hill to the slit trenches I took off on a long tangent slightly downward across the face of the hill, bounding like a goat behind a lieutenant who apparently had the same plan.

We acted in ignorance of the psychology of an artilleryman. Describing this unhappy experience, I was later told by one of our colonels of artillery:

"It's so seldom that an artilleryman gets a chance to shoot at live meat. He can't resist the opportunity."

Having been fed to the ears with the propaganda that the German is a logical, merciless machine who does everything for cold-blooded military reasons, I asked:

"But how can he justify the expenditure of ammunition on just a couple of guys?"

"The artilleryman wouldn't justify it," said this artilleryman. "He'd just do it. I had a dozen Italians running around in a field once and had more fun chasing them this way and that. I couldn't justify the ammunition but we don't get a chance like this very often.

"The remarkable thing is how close a shell can come to a man

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without injuring him. There's a terrific burst and you'd think everything in the vicinity would be destroyed. The next thing you see is the man picking himself up and darting out of the smoke."

That's the way it was. The lieutenant and I had gone about fifty yards when we heard another shell coming. We flattened out and it smashed into the hill just above us, lifting the ground with terrifying force.

I was still hugging the ground when I noticed the lieutenant was already on the way. I had taken about ten long lopes when the No. 2 shell came whistling in and I went down again and there was a terrific smash just below me.

I cantered off again in the direction of the rapidly disappearing lieutenant, a Lieutenant Frawley, of New York, and had made a good long run when another sailed in.

After I got up this time I was like the tramp in the switchyard in *Sullivan's Travels* when the train was confusing him with its headlights. I was just floundering around when Lieutenant Frawley called me. He'd found a wonderful shelter between two huge boulders three times the height of a man. I skittered in with him and had just taken a deep breath when we heard one coming. It struck in front of the boulder and tossed the dirt inside. Another one looped in just behind it and a third one struck a little farther to the right.

Lieutenant Frawley and I shot out of there like two cannon balls and, when last seen by that artilleryman, were going over a little rise like lightning. He let us alone after that and we scrambled back up the hill, keeping in the shelter of the rise, and rejoined our party, which had also had an artistic plastering.

It was at this period that Private Mason pulled out his letter from Miss Folia and read:

" 'Harold, I have a feeling you are in Sicily.' "

(Dear Miss Folia:

We loved you dearly for feeling we were in Sicily. We had this feeling in Sicily so strongly at times that it did our hearts good to know that it was shared by some at home. You were our sunshine that afternoon.)

III MARCHING THROUGH SICILY

We came over the ridge in silence, strung out irregularly. The Mediterranean lay half a mile to our left.

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Scattered troops were advancing carefully down the slope, dropping into the dry river bottom which separated us from the Germans. They scrambled up the stiff bank on the other side and disappeared in an olive grove.

We went down the slope, looking to the right at Mount Fratello, whose fortress top was hidden again in a chemical cloud created by our artillery, which had punctuated the dawn with a huge blasting, rapid as rifle fire.

We passed a dead American nearly hidden in the scattered brush and dry grass. No gun had been fired at us. He must have died the day before, alone, torn by a shell fragment.

We crossed the gravelly, boulder-filled river bed, still silent except for shouted commands to keep twenty-five yards between us. We met no fire, but a soldier with blood on his shirt and streaming from his head was being bandaged while he talked. A medic shouted:

"Watch the barbed wire up there. It's been booby-trapped."

"Roger," shouted the bleeding soldier with a grin, meaning, "Check," and that he'd been booby-trapped.

We went into the olive grove and came to the barbed-wire strand, knee-high, like a trip line. We stepped carefully over it and climbed a series of low stone walls which supported the broad terraces of the gentle olive hill.

We passed a broken farmhouse with the roof and one wall toppled inward. There was an explosion behind us and a captain passed the question back: "What caused the explosion?"

The answer was passed up: "Man tripped over the booby-trap barbed wire."

"You can't teach 'em to watch where they're going," grumbled a lieutenant. "How the hell could he miss seeing the others step over it?"

We came out of the olive grove onto a bare hill. Ahead of us, curving around the base of the hill slowly and silently, with a sort of relentless slowness, walked a couple of hundred men, well spaced out. They entered a fig grove, dropping behind a stone wall. The artillery began woofing again, laying a new cloud of white phosphorus on Mount Fratello. We were well behind the German positions now. The command to halt for a few seconds to avoid congestion was passed down the line. Then the command was passed back to resume marching.

We dropped behind the stone wall into the fig orchard. The

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men ahead were snatching figs as they walked. We began snatching figs too. In the fig orchard, eating the nearly ripe white figs, the tension seemed to lessen. We came out of the fig orchard into a vineyard where hung large clusters of tiny purple grapes, covered with dust, splitting with ripeness.

Spitting out the grape seeds, walking along, the tension relaxed further. We passed through a farm with a vegetable garden in which tomatoes were ripening. We ate the nearly ripe tomatoes, sucking out the insides and throwing away the tough, pulpy covering. After rations, the fresh fruit and vegetable tastes set up a craving. We passed through one orchard, truck garden, and vineyard after another, gorging ourselves, washing down the fresh fruit with swigs from canteens.

Mount Fratello's face was behind us now. We were looking at her side. A little way ahead, coming from high up, we heard a distant cheering from many voices. The cheering continued steadily. We came into an open space. Halfway up the mountain's side was a cave over which a sheet had been hung as a white flag. Beneath the sheet stood fifty or sixty Sicilian men, women, and children, cheering continuously, making a noise like the crowd in an Italian opera.

In a farmyard we found an old man in faded, shrunken clothes, hoeing.

"Where are the Germans?" we asked.

He waved ahead and said they had been passing all through the night.

We came off the hill onto a macadam road which curved along the contours. Some distance ahead an explosion shook the air.

In a few minutes word was shouted along the line: "Send up the medics."

We shouted the call back and proceeded along the road until we came to a blown-up bridge where a crowd of soldiers stood uneasily at the ruins of a stone gatehouse.

A couple of bleeding dust-stained men were stretched on the pavement, their heads pillowed on musette bags, while they received first aid.

"There are four more buried under the gatehouse," an officer said. "They went inside and tried to open a booby-trapped door."

We crossed the dry half-mile river bed above the blown-out bridge and reached the road again. Around the next bend an Italian

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jeep lay on its side, the dead driver still at the wheel, his head and shoulders on the pavement.

A couple of our men pulled the dead Italian out and half a dozen others righted the jeep. It wouldn't run.

We marched on another couple of miles and entered a two-mile-long coast town, knocked up by shells, the fresh debris still in the streets. An Italian soldier was kneeling in a doorway in front of a barred door, his head propped against the sill. He was dead.

We filled our canteens at a public faucet in the main square, crowding around, every man trying to shove his canteen into the stream the instant the previous canteen had been withdrawn.

We went on through the town, glancing down the side streets, each of which framed a bright section of sunlit sea. At the far end of town, just before going into the country again, we halted near some other soldiers. Our artillery was blasting some shells overhead. They were coming down a couple of miles forward. A Mexican boy from Los Angeles, Eddie Rivera, a former boxer, said the Germans had taken up new positions.

"We'll have to get 'em out," he said. "I guess we'll be goin' up any moment now. I'm sure glad we got a good artillery."

CHAPTER XXII

American Fliers

[DEAR READER: *The following chapter has been written at various times and various places. It does not fit neatly into the sequence of the book, but who cares? It is a kind of flashback and roundup of experiences at a number of air bases.*]

WHEN I THINK NOW where I've seen fliers—Palestine, Egypt, Eritrea, Bengal, Assam, Yunnan, Tunisia, Sicily, and Italy—it reminds me of those kid serials of twenty-five and thirty years ago which presented Tom Swift and the Motor Boys in exotic spots on the globe. These fliers were the same thing, always the same characters in the same plot but against a different background. And what backgrounds!

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I PALESTINE FLIERS

First there was Palestine, where the original American bombers in the Middle East settled at Lydda in the fine new civilian airport building which had hotel quarters for transient guests, every room with a shower. This was living de luxe. The weather was balmy and we used to sleep on the hotel terrace, looking up at stars over Palestine in cloudless skies. I can particularly remember a midnight arrival of the Boeings from a successful mission.

They swung low with a roar that woke us just in time to see the pattern of their running lights moving mysteriously across a heavily starred sky. The noise and lights dwindled away and then reappeared from another direction. They slid in for the landing about forty seconds apart, with their headlights probing for the ground like the feelers of an insect, round luminous pillars on which the shadows of the planes were propped. And then, as the wheels touched, the headlights went out and there was only the shadow rushing across the airport with a soft sound of four idling engines.

This was really a glamorous outfit. Led by Colonel Halverson, they came to the Middle East months ahead of any other United States flying unit, late in the spring of '42.

They opened with the first raid on the Ploesti oil fields in Rumania and went on to bomb Rommel's supply lines indefinitely. They finally went home heavily laden with decorations from the Middle East. It was a first-class outfit and was touched with great glory to me because it was my first assignment.

Their base was a polyglot installation. We had for sentries South African blacks who would communicate with each other throughout the night by yelling like jackals. And, in addition, there were real jackals who would also communicate with one another by yelling like jackals. By day we had Jewish Palestinian guards in splendid uniforms. Our crews for gassing up the planes, a tedious hand process by five-gallon gasoline can, no pumps being available, consisted of local Arabs who made a quaint picture in their long nightgowns as they scurried across the giant wings, chattering and gesticulating. And finally, the ground crews for maintaining the planes were made up of Australians, which is a strange people.

With Tel Aviv, the dream city of the Jews, close at hand, these heavy-bomber boys were well fixed. It was a glittering modern town, shot with local color. There were Jews who came there years

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ago to build themselves a Zionist haven, there were Jews who came from Europe only months before as refugees from Hitler, and there were Jews who came from Egypt only days and weeks before as refugees from Rommel. Superimposed were soldiers, British, Free French, Yugoslav, Polish, Greek, Spanish, and so on, strolling in gala show along Tel Aviv's boardwalk, which was the heartbeat of the town.

On the beach was a Coney Island display. Plump mamas were spread over more than their share of sand, squalling at their young, which were running around stark naked, demonstrating, as the guidebook said, "how simply the rationing of clothes can be solved." Pretty girls sat in their beach chairs keeping their eyes straight ahead so they wouldn't become enmeshed in a tangle of admiring military glances. And looking rather forlorn were the menfolk of the town, worrying about what Rommel would do next.

On the other side of the boardwalk ran a solid mile of cafés and cabarets. Tel Aviv is a great town of café society. The cafés were jammed from noon until late at night.

Music filtered from each across the walk and down onto the beach, sometimes a single piano, sometimes an overworked juke box, or in the fancier places a Hungarian orchestra, singing with violins. As added attractions many of the café society establishments featured one-armed bandits with coin slots refashioned to take Palestinian piastres. It was a good town, Tel Aviv. The Middle East was full of good soldiers' towns. But still these boys didn't like it. It wasn't America, and that was enough to put them off Palestine. The Arabs were dirty, and the Jews, they thought, were profiteers. Like Americans nearly everywhere, they hung closely to themselves. Everything else was foreign and to be suspected. All nationalities have this suspicion of the stranger, I suppose, but it seems to me we indulge it more than most others, looking on foreigners with actual distaste. The Russian abroad probably sticks even closer to his kind than we do but without this appearance of uneasiness in the presence of an outlander. Our fliers particularly seem to shrink away from contact with a world in which the predominant characteristics are filth and poverty. Our G.I., generally coming from a simpler background, takes a more uninhibited interest, although he, too, can't forget that he comes of a bathtub race. Cleanliness is our great national trademark.

The censorship was very funny at the time I was staying with this bomb group. America was in a state of mind in which it was

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apparently necessary to paint the war as a good war in which people seldom got hurt or tired or even behaved like soldiers. It was to be described as a sort of fun war fought entirely by Y.M.C.A. fellows. They even cut out of my copy that the flight to Bengasi and back was a long and weary grind. And as to my paragraph about the poker game with colossal pots—somebody's mama might think her little warrior was falling into bad ways.

"You can say they play poker for fun or for low stakes," I was told.

Our censorship has come a long way since then.

II INDIA FLIERS

In an unobtrusive way I managed to miss the Indian bases during the monsoon. The weather was perfect at the heavy-bomber base near Calcutta where I stayed, just balmy, Indian wintertime weather, warm during the day and just nice for sitting outside at night. We'd sit out under a big banyan tree by the hour, a beautiful setting with enchantment. The boys would sit there and spot moths. We'd be talking and a spear of light would stick into the air and poke around until it caught a moth. A half-dozen other lights would flash on and pinion the insect and the fliers would laugh and say: "Rangoon"—where the Japs had bigger lights for four-engined moths.

That's all there was to do but talk. That and crack peanuts and peel bananas. This was great banana- and peanut-eating country. It was a strange existence. At a base like that, remote from the world, bombers are Dr. Jekylls and Mr. Hydes. They follow an unbelievably boring humdrum life for several days. Then every so often they climb into their planes and go off on a bombing jag.

Eight or ten hours later they crawl out of the bottom of their planes, after smearing some docks and setting some ships afire, and go back to peeling bananas, cracking peanuts, and spotting bugs. There's never been anything in war quite like it, especially at a small base like this where there wasn't something doing every day. Life on the farm was never so peaceful, so quiet, and so harmless—except for those fierce interludes when they roamed among the searchlights and the colored rockets of the ack-ack, and spread red ruin below.

They never ran out of talk. But it followed a pattern. There was shop talk, girl talk, and bitching. Nothing much else. They rarely had the slightest intellectual interest in the country where they were

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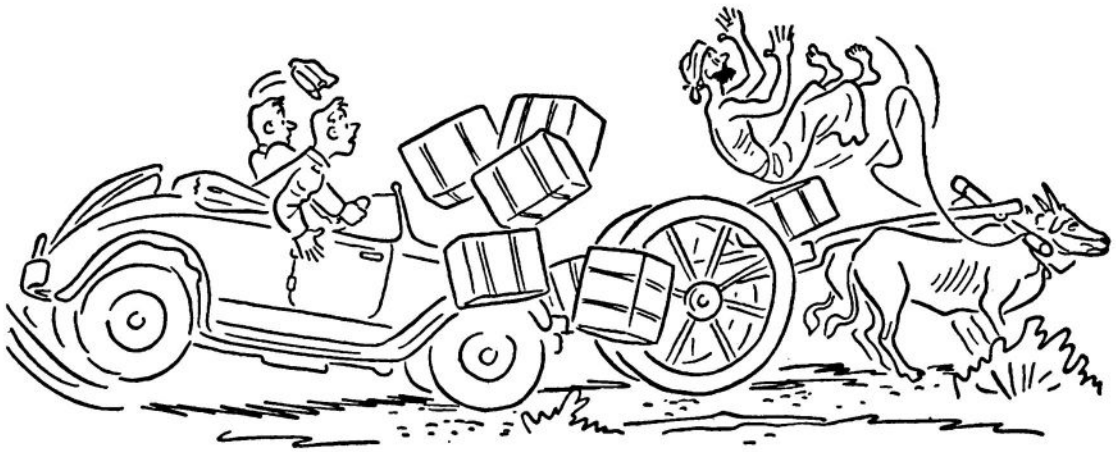
stationed. They hated it and let it go at that. Yet occasionally in a rather wistful way one of them would want to learn something about his surroundings. But he had to do it in a lonely fashion because the others didn't care.

Willie K. Short was one like this, although you'd never think it. He was a plain-spoken Chillicothe, Texas, boy, a little older than the others, and I think maybe he'd known harder times than the others. He'd joined the Army before the war as an enlisted man and had risen to a commission the hard way. We had a lot of fun together. He took me on a raid over Rangoon. And more peaceably we visited the near-by Buddhist temple, fortified with a couple of pocketfuls of small change to throw to the beggars and lepers. Willie K. liked this temple. He'd been before.

To make the trip he succeeded in borrowing an old Plymouth, a curious car which had four speeds forward and none backward. When Willie would forget this idiosyncrasy and put it in the usual reverse gear, it would jump forward with surprising agility. We hit a bullock cart that way that was parked in the middle of the road.

We tried to get past but it seemed we would more likely roll off the bank, so Willie K. slipped into reverse and we jumped forward



and hit the bullock cart. We had quite a time getting to the temple.

The temple, an ancient stone tower of great height, rose from the center of a sunken cemetery, full of greenery and heavily shaded by spreading trees.

It is one of the coolest, most restful spots in the world, old and dark and a little damp. The stone tombs in the shape of bells have been blackened and broken by the years, and the ground between

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them where the ferns don't grow has been beaten into age-old paths by the worshipers. The bare footprints of those who were there yesterday covered the dust and damp spots.

All in all it was about as great a contrast to a military airport, alive with the crescendo roar of warming engines, as you could hope to find.

Even the sounds in this cool grove, which crowds to the base of the sunlit, towering temple, were quiet sounds.

We hired four guides to beat off the beggars and lepers and strolled among the tombs, trying to estimate their age. Then we mounted to the pedestal of the temple and walked about looking at the worn carvings. From the base to the pinnacle stone cutters had worked huge intricate patterns which from a distance give the effect of Mayan designs.

Willie K. interpreted various of these symbolic things to me, but I will not pass on his words as I am not dead sure of his scholarship. Although he seemed fairly well grounded in Buddha and Vishnu and Buddha's mother and knew when to take his shoes off, he may not have been absolutely technically correct.

At the doorway to Buddha's chamber we each bought a basketful of flowers and went into a dark little cavern where a priest was squatting on a stone platform. Above him, huge and mysterious, sat Buddha, a calm smile on his lips and his hands cupped to receive our flowers.

"The priest will chant now," said Willie K. "It's really mysterious to hear him."

The priest, a muscular, strong-faced man of about thirty-five, just sat in silence, however. Willie K. threw a coin in a brass dish so it rang loudly in the cavernlike chamber. The priest sat on in silence.

"He's waiting for you," said Willie K.

I threw a coin in the brass dish and the priest went into a chant for five minutes, a weird, singsong recitation that seemed to have no end.

But suddenly he stopped and raised his hands over us in blessing and our four guides told us we would have good luck.

We sent them ahead to chase away the beggars and lepers who had flocked around the entrance and then we went back to our Plymouth, which Willie shoved into any old gear, knowing it would go forward for sure.

The raid on Rangoon was an experience just for its length. You

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can read a novel on a trip like that. You can read a couple of novels. Some of the boys do. They take along murder mysteries, lunches, candy bars, magazines, and an extra pack of cigarettes. It was eleven or twelve hours before we got back. A trip as long as this, sailing in formation with other bombers, over vast stretches of land and sea, creates a kind of spell which never leaves you. We had a beautiful day and a beautiful trip.

Light puffs of clouds littered the sky beneath us, throwing a pattern of dark blue shadows on the pale blue waters of the Bay of Bengal. Our progress was marked off into fairly regular intervals by a sepulchral voice saying over the interphone:

"We are now at 20,000 feet."

Then a few minutes later: "We are now at 21,000 feet."

After five hours' curving far to sea we reached the far side of Burma, where a delta land of spreading rivers, the mouths of the Irrawaddy, lay below, surprisingly clear considering we were more than four miles up.

It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon and the winter sun, already sinking toward the horizon, colored the landscape with a mellow glow. We began to close formation for the attack, and I remember how distinctly I could see Sergeant Carl Paak in the ship opposite leaning up to his machine gun at the open waist window. The late afternoon sun lighted up the baby-blue wool of his electrically heated flying suit and glistened down the gun barrel. With quick turns of his head he was staring at patches of sky, looking for the Zeros and Jap-flown Messerschmitts which had been coming up after our bombers the last few raids.

In the hard glass bubble atop the ship the head of the turret gunner twisted from side to side, likewise straining into the blue vault for the little specks that in a few seconds can come roaring life-size at a bomber formation, spitting cannon shells.

Captain Bob Kirkaldy, the navigator-bombardier, sitting with me in the glass nose of our ship, pointed across the river-strewn delta country. He pulled off his oxygen mask and shouted:

"The target. At the big bend there."

Up the broadest of the many rivers, at the big bend a lighter patch showed—the buildings of Rangoon. We stepped up our speed and the formation nudged closer together. Through the interphone came the voice of Willie K., of Texas, our pilot:

"We'll be going in."

Captain Kirkaldy bent over his bombsight, making sure of the

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last adjustments. The yellow sunlight, streaming in the glass nose, touched the slowly revolving parts of the beautiful little machine which, skillfully used, can occasionally guide a bomb onto the deck of a ship from four or five miles up.

Rangoon moved slowly closer. At that altitude the vista is so great and things on the ground can be seen so far away that progress seems tantalizingly slow.

The separate buildings became visible and at the bend we could see the crisp pattern of the long cargo sheds, our target, filled with Japanese goods for the defense of Burma.

The lead ship, on our left, seemed not to be moving at all, but only rising and falling slightly like a boat on an almost flat sea.

A little black puff suddenly appeared directly behind her tail. Instantly the smoke drifted behind. For a moment I thought it was exhaust. But it was an ack-ack burst. Below us a dozen bursts fell short.

The bombing run seemed to go on endlessly. I kept watching the lead ship to see her bombs fall. But she only went on and on, rising and falling slowly.

Then at last they went, spilling like seeds and riding just below her for a few seconds before they gathered speed.

They seemed to plummet downward, at the same time falling behind a little, losing forward momentum against the wind. I tried to follow them all the way down but they disappeared.

The docks, our target, still lay ahead. We and the bombs would cross them at approximately the same time. The bombs would follow like our shadow—a shadow that would tear them apart.

The formation curved slowly around and we could look down on the city. At first it seemed as if nothing had happened. The city was still there, apparently as good as ever. Then we saw the two clouds of smoke covering a section of the neat, long, rectangular buildings. Two patterns of bombs had struck, about six or seven sheds apart.

The smoke hung there silently and apparently motionless.

The target had been hit directly.

We roared off across the flat lowlands of Burma, cutting for the coast.

"What time is it?" asked a voice.

"Four minutes past four," said Captain Kirkaldy.

In a long slope from four miles high we raced for India while the sun, hanging low in the western sky, painted the clouds red.

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Behind and a little above us, fat black dots in the green sky, stood the five other homewarding bombers.

And so, sliding into the regions of richer oxygen but still breathing through masks, we came boiling across the Bay of Bengal, driving through the flaming clouds.

The sun touched the water's rim, was striped by a black band of cloud, flattened out with atmospheric distortion, flamed up in a last scarlet burst of glory, and disappeared.

A soft dusk, full of silver and gray, spread across the heavens and deepened into early night.

When the altimeter read 13,000 feet Kirk removed his oxygen mask. We shed our parachutes and life vests, unlatched our throat microphones, and took off the earphones.

Creeping into the belly of the ship, past the big nose wheel, we reached the hatch into the pilot's compartment and pulled ourselves up.

The crew had already gathered for sandwiches and tangerines. Willie K. turned his head backward and shouted:

"What did you fellows see?"

"We hit the docks," I said. "Didn't you see it?"

"——," said Willie K., "I can't see anything from here. I might as well not be on the raid."

"Didn't you see the ShweDagon?" asked Sergeant Orris.

"——, no," said Willie K. "What's that?"

"The golden pagoda that was shining in the sun right in the middle of the city," said Sergeant Orris.

"I've got no more chance of seeing anything than a belch in a whirlwind," said Willie K.

Just so he wouldn't feel any better, we each described the beauties of the ShweDagon, the fabulous pagoda of Rangoon, one of the glories of the Far East, a shining miracle.

"All right, all right," said Willie K. "I'm highly browned off."

Just before night, when there was still light to distinguish the pale reflections on the water from the heavy black of the land, we crossed the profile of the coast of India.

Through the mysterious navigator's magic, Kirk had brought us home on the point.

We drove straight inland, feeling comfortable with the lights of the little towns gleaming cheerily below.

And shortly we saw the swinging beacon of the airfield bringing us in. The ship swung wide around the field and, sliding down

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steeply, felt its way across the landscape with the probing spear of the searchlight until we saw the runway and dropped on its friendly, solid pavement, home again.

A couple of months later I heard Willie K. and Kirkaldy had been shot down coming home from Rangoon, either killed or captured.[1]

Every base has its favorite stories. I think the favorite at this base was the one about Giannini's parachute jump, made by Lieutenant Raymond Giannini, of San Francisco, no relative of the banker.

Giannini was navigator of a ship that got lost in a storm. They began to run out of gas and decided to jump, ordering the sergeant gunners out first. After an interval the captain called back on the interphone:

"Have you boys jumped?"

"Not yet, sir," said the sergeants, who were huddled in alarm.

"Well, jump," said the captain.

"Yes sir," said the sergeants.

After another interval the captain called back again.

"Are you all away?"

"Not yet, sir."

"I'll go back and set the enlisted men a good example," said Lieutenant Giannini, and he crept back to where the alarmed sergeants were gathered around the escape hatch.

"There's nothing to be afraid of, men," he told them, while they peered nervously at the storm which was tossing the plane around like a leaf in a whirlwind. "I'll jump first. You just follow me."

"Yes sir," said the men. "Yes sir."

"All right, men," said Giannini.

"Here you are, sir," said a sergeant, opening the escape hatch.

"Follow me," said Giannini. "I'll lead the way."

"Go ahead, sir," said the sergeants in chorus.

"I'm going," said Giannini. "Follow me, men."

"We will, sir," said the sergeants.

So Giannini jumped.

"Geronimo," shouted the sergeants. "Geronimo. Geronimo, Giannini."

Then they fell to arguing among themselves about who would go next. Giannini, whirling in the storm, watched the rapidly disappearing plane for a stream of sergeants to come piling out.

[1]War Department records on December 9, 1943, show Willard K. Short, 2nd Lt., 0-436009, missing, 3-13-43, Asiatic Area.

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"But nobody followed me," he says plaintively. "There I was all alone in the storm and the plane out of sight."

Inside the ship the sergeants were still arguing about who would go next when they got a call from the pilot on the interphone.

"I've located myself," he said. "We'll be over a field and bring her down in about ten minutes. Nobody jump. I repeat. Nobody jump."

"Giannini's jumped," said a sergeant.

"Damn," said the pilot.

Giannini blew along the coast, sometimes over water and sometimes over land.

He finally came down on a deserted island. Next day he built fires and made all sorts of smoke signals and the boys came over with a packet of food which they threw down in a parachute.

"That'll hold him until we can get help," they said.

But the food flew into a bunch of trees and Giannini never could find it. For three days he had to starve until they finally rescued him with a boat.

III CHINA FLIERS

THE FIRST THING I did in China was to see *Take a Letter* at the open-air show run for our fliers. In this picture there were several kisses, and the way the boys carried on when Rosalind Russell was kissed showed how anxious they were to see their wives and how few had found Chinese sweethearts.

That was a first impression of our fliers in China and it turned out to be a correct one. China was the most woman-lonely country. It needed nurses, not because the boys were so sick but because they were so healthy.

Love starvation is comic. When Rosalind got the longest kiss many soldiers, especially the privates and corporals, stood up and spun around, giving the mating call. It was very interesting from an anthropological point of view. One private first class bit his cigar in half.

The boys were even falling in love with pictures. There was a lieutenant from Salt Lake City who hauled out the picture he had fallen in love with and smoothed it with loving fingers, exclaiming:

"How's that? Hasn't she got everything—face, figure, personality? How about it?"

It was a two-year-old full-page photo from *Life* of a dancer.

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It had gotten so bad in China that the fliers at one base formed what they called the Overseas Virgins of America, composed of married men. I wrote a story about it but either the censors killed

it or my paper killed it. I've never seen it since. It was quite a society. I had a complete list of the members and was threatened with assassination if I left any of them out: they thought it would make a bad impression on their wives. As a colonel said:

"If my wife should hear there is an Overseas Virgins Society and I wasn't a member of it, it would be bad." On the roster was listed the Unknown Virgin. Like the Unknown Soldier, nobody knew who he was. If anybody's wife wrote, "I see there's an Overseas

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Virgin Society. How does it happen you don't belong?" he could answer:

"Darling, I'm the Unknown Virgin."

I wish I knew what happened to this story.

The airfield where I spent the most time lay in a landscape as queer as the bottom of a coral sea.

It was a weird and twisted place like a rock garden in a goldfish bowl but extending over a great plain so the horizon was circled by the misshapen but beautiful silhouettes of crooked hills.

Landing and taking off, the planes swam through these deformed shapes, following the valleys between, which meandered this way and that, emerald green with the growing rice.

There's no other place like it in the world. And in the broad moonlight, with flashes of silver running through the flooded rice and the black shadows of the hills lying richly on the still waters, it was a scene of fantastic Chinese beauty. The winking orange of a million fireflies gave it one last unbelievable touch. And there was still one ultimate unbelievable touch when the anti-aircraft searchlights waved their rigid white poles in the sky, forming patterns like the spokes of a broken wheel.

The Air Forces operations room had been established in one of the caves with which the twisted, wind-eroded hills are pitted. To keep off the dripping damp an entire house with roof and floor and walls had been built into its lofty dimness like a motion picture set within a soundproofed studio.

Here, removed from the heat and glare of the Chinese summer, the staff worked in a semirefrigerated atmosphere, lit by naked globes swinging on long cords from the rafters. At a line of tables in the center of the house sergeants and corporals hammered out multiple copies of reports.

The fliers, easing themselves from the heat and glare, wandered in from time to time and sat on a line of long bamboo chairs where they chewed the fat and drank the hot tea, steaming in a gasoline tin, which was lugged in by a corps of Chinese coolies.

In front of the cave on a terrace which ran like a front porch other fliers sat with their shirts off, tipped back in chairs, getting a sun tan. Below them, nestling among the hills, stretched the broad runway where the fighters and bombers would take off in teams of three, dragging tremendous dust screens behind them.

Often the planes would be completely hidden in the haze and

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only the rising bellow of their engines would indicate their presence. Then suddenly they would lift beautifully out of the dust and slant upward across the paddy fields, following the planes ahead, which were neatly stacked against a blue sky in a rising echelon.

Fifteen minutes later, after a long wheel around the horizon, they would come thundering across the field in formation at 2000 and 3000 feet, the bombers riding tightly together and the fighters sliding through the air above in lengthy curves. They'd be off to the target in a drumbeat of thrilling sound.

Those who hadn't gone would sit and chatter and kid and trade angles on the work they had been doing. The latest hot assignment of the fighters had been strafing Jap troop concentrations. Captain Walter Smith, of Tulsa, Oklahoma, for example, had this angle on the strafing:

"I don't mind shooting the Japanamans but I don't like shooting the horses because I spent two days on one of them." He'd given the Jap cavalry a strafing the previous day and it hurt him to see the horses go down struggling

"I got forced down with engine trouble one time and a little Chinese horse carried me home," he said. "I sure hate to shoot horses now."

They'd talk shop by the hour about all the odd and unexpected things in a war theater. Captain Smith had further information on the subject of Chinese horseback riding.

"You know," he said, "how the Chinese do everything backward. I tried to get on the horse on the left, and damn, they told me I had to get up on the right. I tried to put my toe in the stirrup and they told me to put my heel in the stirrup."

"You know these Oklahomans," said a Texan. "He probably had the saddle on backwards."

"He probably had his shoes on backwards," said an Ohioan.

The P-40s were doing a good deal of dive bombing at this time. They liked it better than escorting bombers or fighter sweeps. Captain Teddy Shapou had his angle on this:

"It's like a boxing match," he said. "You hit your man and you see his eye swell."

Captain Shapou's best trick had been to dive on a locomotive on a turntable and hit it square. From that point forward all the locomotives from Hankow had to back home from the end of the line.

Another great stroke was the direct hit on a Japanese consolation headquarters. A Japanese consolation headquarters is a place the

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Japanese establish to console the soldiers for being away from their wives. There was no more consolation at this headquarters after a bomb caught it in the east bedroom.

There had been a week of gray weather over the Jap target area, but finally one glowing June Sabbath the sun burned out the mist and cleared the way for airplane excursions. It was a memorable Sunday because everyone who had a plane was out Sunday-flying. We were out in force and the Japs were out in force. The memorable thing was that nobody got hurt except some Japanese ground personnel at an airport called Nanchang.

We were up bright and early, as befitted such a perfect day, and assembled in front of the alert shack to hear Major A. P. Forsyth make a short and chilling speech about what we were going to do to the Japs and what the Japs might be going to do to us while we were doing it to them.

"The Japs have got a lot of stuff at Nanchang and undoubtedly they will intercept us," said A. P. "We've got to fly like we're chained together."

There were a lot of new boys going on their first mission, so A. P. gave them a final warning not to shoot down our own escorting force of P-40s.

"There are a lot of fine boys flying these P-40s," he said. "They'll be doing their best to save your lives. Bear that in mind when you finger the trigger. But when you see one of those blunt-nosed Zeros, don't hesitate. Now be in your planes at twelve-thirty. I'll activate at exactly twelve thirty-five."

Our little party of terrified airmen, grinning and whistling out of nervousness, went to an old plane called 06, which had been on more raids than any other medium bomber in China—more than a hundred.

What 06 could boast in experience we made up in inexperience, however. Our copilot, Second Lieutenant James J. Harnett, of the Bronx, had never been on a raid before. Neither had our bombardier, First Lieutenant Robert J. Kroll, of Lansing, Michigan. Nor our gunners, Staff Sergeants Joseph Thomas Borgia, of Brooklyn, and Ray Hamilton, of Plainview, Texas.

Our stiffening of experience were the pilot, First Lieutenant Don Milan, of Ruston, Louisiana, and an extra bombardier we brought along to kibitz on Kroll, First Lieutenant Guy Baird, of Grand Rapids, Texas.

The fighters under Colonel Casey Vincent took off first, each lay-

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ing down a choking dust screen. And then the first six bombers took off under Major Forsyth, laying bigger dust screens, and then along came old 06 with its shuddering virgins. There was dust to the right of us, dust to the left of us, dust ahead of us, and dust behind us. The only direction there wasn't dust was straight up, where we could see a patch of blue sky.

With a howling roar, leaping and bounding on the rippling runway, we plunged into the swirling clouds, disappeared from everything, the engines bellowing ferociously, made one last dust-hidden bounce, and then sailed up like a skipping stone into the clear air, and were flying, pushing the engines to catch the planes ahead.

Before we had even caught up the radio blurted the news that a Jap reconnaissance plane had just passed over the airport beyond the reach of our P-40s and was telling the world that the B-25s were on the way.

While the radio continued to report varied flights of Zeros in the sky we approached the target obliquely to fool the Japs. It was during this trying period that Bombardier Baird elected to explain the no longer secret wonders of the Norden bombsight, which was like listening to a lecture on trigonometry while being led to the death chamber. After a long session on the logarithm and temperature and velocity tables, we hove into view of the target.

There wasn't a Zero around. The bomb doors were flung open, blowing the accumulated dust into our faces, and Kroll, in the glass nose, began peering into his sight. The six ships ahead, in tight formation, seemed to float on gentle swells. Their bombs began spilling and then ours went, and Bombardier Kroll shouted triumphantly, "Bombs away!"

Bombardier Baird leaped on Bombardier Kroll's back, where he could watch the bombs fall, and I leaped on Bombardier Baird's back. The bombs fell and fell and fell until they fell out of sight, while Bombardier Kroll struggled feebly, trying to get a look himself at his first handiwork on the Japs.

"They're hitting. See them?" shrieked Baird.

"Yes," I screamed, although I must have been looking at the wrong place because I didn't see them.

"No," bellowed Kroll, trying to buck us off.

Then the ship cocked over on its right side as we started home and we could all look out the glass and see the slowly flowering smoke going in long patterns the length of the great Jap air base on Nanchang, not a smoke off the target.

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Still flying as if we were chained, we went into a fast slide for free China. The radio brought us a report that the Japs were in two waves over the base from which we had taken off, burning up gasoline waiting for us. So we went off another way and landed at another base, no longer shuddering but talking loudly about what a jolly life a bomber leads. Who's afraid of the big bad Jap?

CHAPTER XXIII

Attempt to Go Home

AFTER THE SICILIAN campaign I decided to go home by boat and write this book en route. That showed how much I knew about writing a book. It also showed how much I knew about boats in wartime. Two and a half weeks later I was still waiting at the dock for the convoy to leave and I had just barely finished Chapter One. This was the next to the most agitated, frustrated period in my life, the most agitated, frustrated coming a month later in Italy. But this was terrible. All around me troops were preparing for the invasion of Italy, the Eighth Army made its landing, and I was beginning Chapter Two.

But I stayed by my decision to go home, telling myself every hour, "You might as well go now. There isn't going to be a better time to go home. Go home, see your family, write your book, and be back in time for the big show in the spring."

Finally the word came to get aboard the boat. I had been told it would be half empty on the return trip and that I would probably have a stateroom to myself for writing the book. I got aboard and there wasn't even a hammock. A chief surgeon with admirable initiative had taken the boat by storm. He had been assigned a limited number of berths to take care of a limited number of wounded. But he was a man who cut through trifling assignments with a meat ax. On the day of loading he gathered every ambulance and vehicle which would carry wounded men and sent them to the boat all at once, hustling the patients aboard so fast that the ship's officers were confounded and confused, lost count, got all mixed up, and the next thing they knew all the ambulances and vehicles were gone and they were stuck with an overload of wounded.

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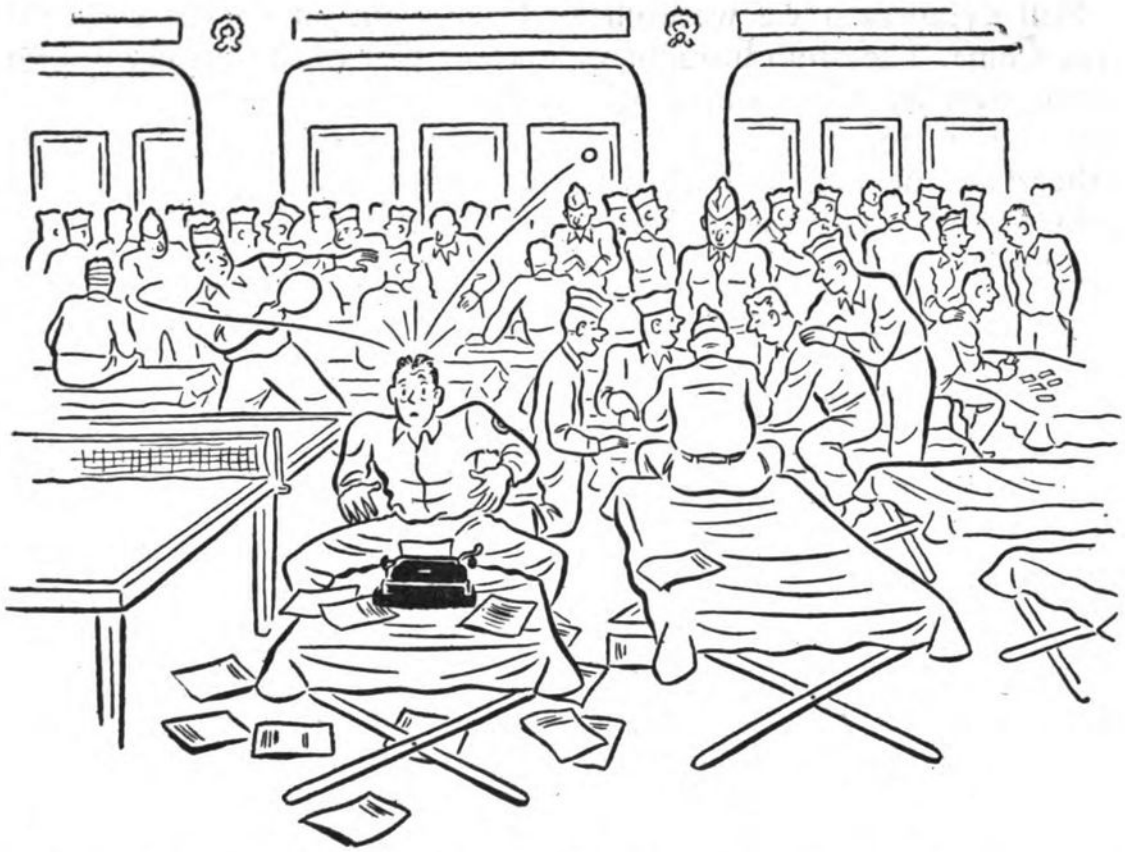

For a good place to write my book I got a cot in the lounge next to the ping-pong table.

The ship was "sealed" that night. That means the passengers can't get off once they're on. Chapter Two didn't come off so well, so I tore it up and skipped Chapters Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten, Eleven, Twelve, and Thirteen, and began work on Chapter Fourteen.

But the atmosphere on our ship was discouraging because we never left the dock. There were plenty of signs of departure but we never departed, and I shortly discovered that I could not continue Chapter Fourteen until we had put to sea. There was something about being tied to a dock and reading signs of departure which discouraged literary effort.

When the gangplank telephone was disconnected, for instance, we passengers read it as a sign of departure within an hour. Twenty-four hours later we were still sitting at dock. When a certain hatch was battened down after dark, many crew members read it as a sign of departure before first light, although others read it as a sign that someone was collecting time and a half for battening down a hatch after hours. None of these signs ever led to anything while I was

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aboard. When I left she was tied to the dock with a hundred hawsers and everybody was reading it as a sign of early departure that the purser had issued a last call on exchanging French money for American money.

Besides reading signs I had a special nerve frazzler in the news. Every hour we lay at the dock the news of the invasion of Italy became more dramatic and more people asked me how it happened that a war correspondent was going home at such a time.

"Have you the malaria?" they asked.

The only answer I could give was that I had been away fifteen months. That seemed to me a plenty good answer but they were driving me to distraction and I didn't know whether I wanted the ship to leave or not. I began to look with nervousness on a new sign of departure: the loading of thousands of Italian prisoners into the lower regions of the ship.

"We never stay at dock long after prisoners are loaded," said a seaman. "It's a sure sign we'll be off by dark." Next morning we were still sitting at the dock.

I gave up Chapter Fourteen and skipped Chapters Fifteen, Sixteen, and Seventeen, and tried Chapter Nineteen.

Then there was another sign of early departure. Some German officers were shoehorned into the ship. Those of us who had sleeping quarters around the ping-pong table were highly browned off to discover that a battery of staterooms had been reserved for the Germans. We let off a lot of smoking remarks and our war effort sank to zero.

We were told, however, that not so many Germans had come aboard as expected, so we could have the leftover staterooms. This brought our war effort up to about 25 per cent.

We first saw the Germans when they marched through our dining room to their dining room, looking neither to left nor right but straight at the neck of the man in front of them.

They didn't nod to us so we didn't nod to them.

The universal comment after this first inspection was: "How young they look."

They not only looked young. Many had a rather immature, undeveloped look, which is not so noticeable among our young officers, who are better filled out. They had on reasonably well-preserved uniforms, which favored shorts rather than trousers. Many wore their medals. The first impression was a frosty determination to ignore our presence.

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This was completely altered after dinner. They gathered in the corridor outside their staterooms and eagerly asked us for the news.

Nearly all seemed to speak English or French. They became rather excited and animated. I suppose it was the normal excitement of passengers about to sail. Little did they know how securely this ship was fastened to that dismal dock! We, the Americans, had already sweated it out two days at that damned dock.

But the Germans thought they were off! As word of their presence in the corridor spread, more and more Americans came down to talk to them. And more and more Germans came out of their staterooms to join in the discussion.

Most of the Americans had never talked to a prisoner before and approached the matter gingerly but resolutely determined to have the experience.

In a few minutes, however, the barriers were down and both sides were bragging in a rather kidding way about what they were doing to each other in the Battle of Italy.

This was only half an hour before we got the flash of Italy's surrender.

The Germans individually seemed convinced that they had a large force in Italy and that the battle would be rugged, especially in the north. They told us we didn't know yet what fighters the Germans could be.

In the middle of the discussion the news of Italy's surrender was received. The Germans were bewildered and humiliated. The Americans appeared rather puzzled as to how to take the news in front of the Germans.

A few shouted triumphantly, but after the first burst of excitement most of the Americans continued talking as though nothing in particular had happened. I listened to several Germans who, in a rather pathetic way, tried to explain away the surrender as nothing important.

Then a military policeman came down and broke up the meeting, making an announcement that we were not to talk to the prisoners, although I thought it had already been threshed out that we could talk to them if the prisoners were agreeable.

Meanwhile the thousands of Italian enlisted men on the decks below were in a buzz, and we went down to see their goings on, which were progressively louder and merrier as they became convinced it was a fact and not a rumor.

The general idea they were trying to put over was that they were

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no longer prisoners but Allies. On the basis of the scanty information at the time nobody aboard ship knew what they were.

The guards and onlookers compromised by giving them an abundance of cigarettes against strict orders that there was to be no communication, tradings, or dealings of any kind with them.

Then I went upstairs and met three persons in a row who said, "Well, you are going home at an exciting time, aren't you?"

It broke my nerve and I decided to get off the damned ship and leave her to rot tied to her dock, if she wanted to, while I returned to the wars.

And nobody at home will ever know how disgusting it was.

CHAPTER XXIV

Italy Sketches

On my return to Algiers for assignment to Italy I discovered that the press committee had given me a new classification, Low Man on the Totem Pole, the lowest priority of any man in the theater. I believe there were 140 correspondents at the time. I was 140th on the list for getting facilities such as going to Italy. This distinction was bestowed because I sent stories by mail instead of cable. I accepted the classification with intense ill-will.

Then I was selected to fly to Malta to meet the newly surrendered Italian fleet as pool representative for the radio networks, American, British, and Canadian. This salved my wounded vanity but turned out to be a catastrophe. I was schooled in how to send messages so as not to run up high cable bills but I became confused and in my ardor sent thousands of words for three days at the urgent rate.

I ran up a bill somewhere near a thousand dollars, I believe, but the cable company finally settled by charging the lowest possible rate, bringing us out at about two hundred dollars, of which I had to pay 25 per cent out of my own pocket.

Things went wrong from this point. I finally got to Italy, however, through the kindness of my old friend, George Houghton, but there was a catch in it. At the insistence of the press committee I was restricted to writing of air activities only, but this was not too bad as I could always start off describing bomb damage and then slide into other subjects. I got so I could find bomb damage where most people would say nothing had happened at all. Twice I was threat-

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ened with expulsion for these slidings into non-air topics but I managed to survive, bearing a few grudges. Added to this trouble, I was sick off and on for nearly two months, but with the encouragement of Captain (now Major) Jay Vessels of the United States Air Force, I took advantage of this period of confinement and began to write my book in earnest. At the apartment where his Air Force Public Relations had its quarters I had many conferences with Captain Vessels and he even read a few chapters. Despite many mishaps, the Italian episode was fascinating now that I look back, and I wouldn't have missed it. And being with the Air Force, even though too tightly confined to it, was an experience, because the USAAF and the RAF did the work which made this invasion possible. Without those two gallant services it would have been a sad story. They did a job of such skill and such proportions that it would have been considered impossible a year earlier. There'd never been anything to compare with it. For a long period the land army got by only because of the overwhelming air supremacy.

I WITH THE RAF

After Houghton flew me into Italy I stayed first with the RAF. We had a villa opposite a tobacco factory. After we had been there a few days the owner showed up and wanted it back. We took this to be a good sign that the invasion had succeeded. The owner of this villa wasn't a chancy fellow. He was a cold businessman and he'd judge a battle like he'd judge a bale of tobacco leaf in his factory across the street.

But we refused to give up the villa. It was the third best place in town.

"Good Lord, man," said Squadron Leader Rice, "you can't come back here. Think of your children."

We knew he had seven children because a plaque on the wall bore congratulations from the Fascist government on his patriotic productivity.

"This is still a battle area," continued the squadron leader. "You can't bring your children in here. The Germans may counterattack any time—tonight even."

Our unwilling landlord shook his head. He told us everything was safe. He told us, through his interpreter, that the military situation was quite well in hand. His interpreter was a twenty-three-year-old local schoolteacher who conducted classes in history, geography, Greek, Italian, and English when her school wasn't being used for a hospital.

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"I've got relatives in Los Angeles," she said. "My brother Anthony is a lawyer in Los Angeles and my brother Hadrian is a student at one of your universities. I am their sister Lydia and my father lives in Pittsburgh."

I expressed all the astonishment in the world, although as a matter of fact I would be astonished if she didn't have relatives in America. Just about everybody who speaks fifty words of Poosh-emup-Tony English has relatives in America.

Well, this villa had pictures on the wall and a great big directors' room for the tobacco factory which was ideal for a mess, so we put it up to the owner in a straight way that his villa had been properly requisitioned, that it would be well taken care of, that we would take no books out of the shelves, and would water the potted plants on the veranda just as though we had leased the place.

"In accordance with the military regulations," said Squadron Leader Rice, "you are entitled to one room in the house for your family if you like. We will be happy to let you have this room."

As the owner of our villa had altogether thirteen persons living with him, including his father-in-law, his mother-in-law, and two aging aunts, he turned down our proposition to let him use the one room. We managed to conceal our disappointment.

"Although it is a great inconvenience," he told us, "I will go live at my villa in the country until you have moved. You will probably be in Naples in a week."

Those were the kind of words we liked to hear. We told him to come back in a week and asked him if he knew anybody in Naples who had a nice villa we might move into if they were out of town. Feigning ignorance, he protected any villa owners he might have known in Naples from becoming our landlords.

In Naples it was going to be a matter of all of us scouting around for ourselves and beating the Army and the Navy and everybody else to a good villa. Finding accommodations in a strange town for a lot of homesick, lonely travelers like us was quite a problem. You had to find just the right thing. It couldn't be too good. If it was too good some general was apt to come along and claim it.

II WITH AMERICAN SPITFIRES IN ITALY

While staying at this villa I visited different units of our Air Forces. Every time I saw an American outfit which had trained exclusively with the British the conviction grew stronger that

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Anglo-American friendship after the war is practical, something which I doubted eighteen months ago. Or, to put it another way, if it isn't practical, it will be the fault of the Americans at home and the British at home. They'll be the troublemakers who from afar see their cousins' faults but not their virtues. It won't be the ones who mixed and met like these American Spitfire pilots who've been flying British planes and learning British ways for nearly a year and a half now.

This unit, more than any other, perhaps, had had a chance to become really well acquainted with our other half, to whom we will be married for better or worse in the horrible and uncertain postwar world. And without going overboard or painting a sentimental picture in false hues, it can be fairly stated that they sincerely respected the British, got along with them at close quarters, and were able to make a go of their test-tube-size experiment in Anglo-American relations.

The unit, composed of boys from every portion of the United States originally, arrived in England in June 1941 and was immediately, without any international conditioning, given the full British treatment. It was assigned British Spitfires and given its final training for combat by the British.

And this wasn't an isolated instance. I saw it two years ago when Brigadier General Auby Strickland brought the first American fighter pilots to the Middle East. He was a fan on Anglo-American relations and boldly threw his boys in among the RAF with the conviction that the more they saw of one another the more they would appreciate one another. And it definitely worked.

Strickland's pilots went through the same careful introduction to battle as did these American Spitfire pilots. On their first missions they had RAF top and middle cover and were led by experienced RAF pilots. And liked and appreciated it. This wouldn't mean so much were it not for the striking contrast among some of our long-range bomber pilots, who often live off in the sticks somewhere, isolated from nearly everybody, including the British.

My observation, which may be incorrect, is that, generally speaking, they look with suspicion on the British and are ready and loaded to take offense at British mannerisms. They have a low tolerance for our cousins and are connoisseurs of all the things British which are annoying to Americans.

These Spitfire pilots who are British-conditioned have long ago learned better. They accept the British strictly as they are. If the

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British are sometimes a little slower on the uptake than Americans, they shrug it off. They know also that the British are pretty steady in the clutch and that you can't derange the one without the probability of deranging the other. Moreover, they recognize that the British aren't at all interested in being changed to suit American tastes.

It was pleasant enough during this Salerno period. Even though our artillery was whistling shells over our head from time to time, and even though a Jerry broke through once in a while to strafe the roads, it seemed so sweet and safe. The Salerno coastal plain was really just a lovely southern California orchard country on the Mediterranean instead of on the Pacific. The ripe apples were hanging in clusters, the oranges were just turning orange, the grapes were just going out, the figs and the quinces were in, and there were fields rotting with tomatoes. In the background were those familiar dry bushy hills. In those hills it wasn't so much fun. That's where Jerry was making us buy our way to Naples.

But I've long ago learned this: you can't feel for men in battle when you're not with them. You can't feel frightened with them. You can't feel real pity. The best you can muster is a weak emotion for soldiers in general, which isn't one tenth the emotion you feel for one individual soldier when you see him start forward for an attack with that strange hurried expression on his sweating face.

So for the time being, with an Air Force assignment in this sunny orchard land, the war looked safe and smiling. Of course it might have had another face if I'd had to go up in a Spit once or twice a day on fighter patrol. But even that wouldn't have been so bad. We had Jerry thoroughly driven out of the skies. In the air he was finished, and every day we were gaining in air strength.

This valley was stiff with Allied planes which were giving immediate support to the less happy infantry. In less than two weeks our Air Force had effectively driven his air force out of this section of Italy. It was an achievement worth thinking of. It was paying off right then in victory.

It's a very grave doubt how this battle would have gone had the *Luftwaffe* been halfway able to match the Allied Air Forces in planes and pilots.

III ON THE ROAD TO NAPLES

I've written stories under difficulties before, but once on the road to Naples, the difficulties reached a new peak. In the little town

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of Torre Annunziata, where I was sitting in a station wagon trying to write a story, I found myself surrounded by about a thousand Italians, all offering suggestions.

"Fascisti, boom, boom, boom," said one stout fellow, showing what he would do to the Fascisti if they should be so foolish as to come around.

If I had known a little Italian I would have asked him why he didn't "boom, boom, boom" the Fascisti when they were still within "boom, boom, booming" distance. It's funny how people think of these things later.

From time to time some peasant pushed through the crowd shouting dramatically. He knocked on the door until I looked up. Then through the broken window he handed me walnuts. Every time this happened I had to crack a walnut and eat it while the crowd applauded deafeningly. This was my most successful act. It got an ovation every time.

Between paragraphs, if there was a moment's lull, maidens threw flowers through the window. If some blossoms happened to catch in my hair or hang from my ear there was more applause. Then there was steady cheering while I picked the stems and blooms from the typewriter keys and prepared to do another paragraph. Some of these maidens offered to accompany me to America and become my wife—or not. Laughingly I promised to do my best. Then some old codger came up and shook me by the hand and said:

"Americans, good. My brother Philadelphia."

We talked about Philadelphia briefly, and I managed to knock out another paragraph or two before a small boy climbed on the running board and explained that he was a "*piccolo*," which meant he was a small boy, which I could see. It also appeared to mean that in his capacity as a piccolo he was deserving of being given a cigarette.

"Piccolo—cigarette," he said.

If I gave him a cigarette, as I had foolishly done to a couple of other piccolos, there was another five minutes lost while I beat off eighteen other small boys who also considered themselves deserving of a cigarette. The lucky piccolo, meanwhile, strutted barefoot on the fringe of the crowd, puffing importantly. Then I became impatient and shouted, "*Silenzio*," which means "Silence" in Italian, they tell me.

There was always some important gentleman who immediately assumed an authority roughly approaching that of governor of a

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state. He yelled and screamed and ranted at them that this was a distinguished "*giornalista americano*" in the throes of creative endeavor and that everyone must instantly be quiet. Everybody instantly remained noisy, and a little girl who had obviously just been hastily shoved into her Sunday dress and had a ribbon tied in her hair made her way through the crowd juggling a tumbler full of a white liquid. The crowd applauded her.

"That's deadly stuff, sir," said Johnny Forester, the RAF driver. "It's deadly."

It was grappa, a kind of Italian white mule. I took a slight sip, however, and it was deadly. I coughed and the crowd cheered deafeningly.

Lest you begin to confuse me with Montgomery, this was no special attention. Every British tank and Bren-gun carrier crew for two miles up and down the length of this town's narrow rubble-strewn main street got the same treatment.

The Tommies for the most part retreated to the tops of their tanks, where they grinned and bore a hailstorm of blossoms and shoved off piccolos who were anxious to climb aboard and explore the mysteries of a General Sherman tank.

Babies were held up for them to kiss and from time to time they were given encouragement for the coming battle with some of that stuff that's deadly. The battle was not far off, either. In fact, half a mile forward the advance tanks were woofing shells forward and the reports rang down the street as though it were the inside of a bell.

But the crowd paid no attention and seemed to feel no alarm that the Jerries would woof a few shells back. They had had it here, I guess. They'd been bombed and shelled in pretty good style.

Flight Lieutenant Michael Salzer, my RAF conducting officer, who spoke five or six or maybe eight or nine languages, struck the jackpot here.

Wandering around looking for bomb damage, which was his duty, he came upon a beautiful big white stone house in the middle of the park, lit up by flowers of great size and rare variety. He peered through the iron grillwork gates thoughtfully. Then he beckoned to a gardener and spoke to him in Italian, one of Flight Lieutenant Salzer's ten or eleven languages. The gardener nodded and went for the master of the estate, a small gray Italian in a gray suit. Flight Lieutenant Salzer and the master spoke briefly and the grillwork gate swung open. Thereafter the RAF had a new advance

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Public Relations headquarters maintained in a style to which we were unaccustomed.

The small gray Italian, Eugenio Faraone Mennella, gave us a suite —bedroom, dining room, and veranda. We were short of a running-water bathroom because the Germans knocked out Torre Annunziata's water supply. But we had a very fine dry-run bathroom with lavender fixtures and an indefinite number of chambermaids to fetch buckets of water from the reservoir. The whole place was filled with an indefinite number of people. Signore Faraone Mennella had five children himself, and he or his wife must have had a lot of brothers and sisters because the place was swarming with young nephews and cousins from Naples who were on visit until the affair with the Germans should have blown a little north. In addition there were all kinds of old people around, plus a lot of indefinite-looking people of nondescript age who seemed to be friends of Signore Faraone Mennella, also on visit until the affair blew north, which it hadn't been doing any too fast the last few days. The Germans were fighting fiercely.

When we first arrived our most forward position was only a mile up the road, and as we ate lunch the house trembled constantly with the concussion of the heavy guns, some of which were located unfortunately in Signore Faraone Mennella's apricot orchard. Nobody was worried about the apricots, but there was some apprehension lest the Germans would spot these guns and return the fire.

Signore Faraone Mennella had another worry. His estate at Torre del Greco would probably be the scene of the next battle with the Germans. In fact, there had been an artillery colonel up there one night, consulting with Signore Faraone Mennella on the most efficient way to shell his estate and blow the Germans back another lap. Signore Faraone Mennella chose to view this as a good joke, which was probably the most sensible way to look at it. He seemed to be very rich.

The Italian campaign provided supreme subjects. There was no need to strain for the words. A simple narrative of things as they happened was always powerful, although sometimes it didn't seem to come off as easily as that. But the material was always there, which is more than can be said of some assignments I've written about with immense suffering. In Italy there were truly dramatic and unduplicated scenes, vivid and bizarre, and with all the unexpectedness of war which you finally come to expect.

I particularly remember the fall of Lagone, a little stone town

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tucked in a wooded saddleback. It lay in rocky and lovely mountain scenery, where no automobile had ever been until the day after we took over, when we bulldozed a road up a canyon and sent in a jeep.

The Germans had held us up for weeks before Lagone; then, as so often happened, they pulled out, giving us no warning, taking us by surprise. We'd flanked them, but to us in front of the town it was a total surprise.

With some men of the 45th Division, I was taking cover this day in a cave in the canyon just below Lagone. I heard an old woman's voice. I looked out and she beckoned to me and handed me a baby which was wrapped in a blanket. The old woman was crying, which seemed strange, since she looked too dried up for tears, and the baby was crying, which felt strange. The vibration of its thin yells came right through the blanket into my hands.

The whole business was out of key in this mountain canyon which was crashing and ringing with artillery and machine-gun fire. A dozen peasant women and children, sobbing, winded, and terrified, pushed up behind the old woman, who was stuck. She couldn't scramble up a few yards of slippery, muddy incline. She was still carrying a basket, and when she gave me her free hand for an assist I noticed it was twisted and withered. I took her by the wrist and pulled her up and she sat down and wept, while a half-dozen soldiers helped the others up.

This was the most bizarre and incredible battle situation I've seen. It was rare.

On top of the mountain opposite, clearly visible with glasses, the French were having a go with the Germans. They had tried first with grenades and rifles and failed to dislodge them. Then they had gone in with bayonets.

At this particular moment they were still pushing, creeping toward the wood, covered with fire from their machine guns as well as smoke and high explosives from their artillery. The Germans were striking back with artillery and with salvos from their six-barrel Nebelwerfers, the famous screaming meemies which whistle and whistle and whistle for an eternity and finally smash down in a simultaneous blast of high explosives.

And now down this canyon these Italian women were struggling, bringing the first news of the fall of Lagone, the little town which we had been shelling for two weeks and where last night our men were fighting in the streets, finally withdrawing. We had another

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assault planned for the afternoon, but the news these women brought changed the plan. The Germans, they said, had pulled out.

The women were escaping after being prisoners many days in the cellars of Lagone, with walls and roofs collapsing around them as we pounded the town toward submission.

Weak and terrified as they were, they came off carrying on their heads baskets and bundles which Pfc. John Moynahan, of Boston, described as so heavy that "even a young fellow wouldn't try to come down that mountain with them."

They led sheep, goats, and pigs tied to their waists by halters, and the excited animals occasionally jerked them off the trail and sent them sprawling down the slope. Then, covered with mud, gasping and weeping and crying out in Italian, they would pick up their belongings and clamber back up while the women on the trail above shouted excitedly at them. If they had been men, if they hadn't been crying, and if they hadn't had children with them, it would have been slapstick comedy. But as things were, it was neither comic nor tragic. It was grotesque.

As soon as he was convinced the women knew positively that the Germans had left town, Captain Henry W. Strong, of Far Rockaway, Long Island, our forward observer, telephoned the news to regiment headquarters, and Lieutenant Ernest B. Deen, of Beggs, Oklahoma, started into town with a six-man patrol.

I climbed to another observation point where Second Lieutenant Ralph Rumbaugh, of Des Moines, Iowa, was preparing to cover the entrance of the patrol with mortar fire in case the Germans had left a few snipers behind.

We didn't see the detail enter but knew they had gotten into town when there was a sharp crack and Sergeant Alvin Curl, of Lawton, Oklahoma, watching through glasses, explained:

"Somebody's tripped a booby trap. I can see the smoke."

Then we got word the town was clear of Germans and Sergeant Curl resumed his role as spectator of the French attack, calling from a slit trench:

"Those damn French, I believe, are going to try that other damn hill. It's going to be another battle. Boy, you should have seen them make that bayonet attack this morning. You could see them jump over that stone wall three at a time, making a noise like a flock of geese. The way they were yelling sounded from here just like geese."

And Sergeant Lee Dial, of Italy, Texas, which he says has popu-

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lation 1200 and men in service nearly 300, yelled: "You could see the bayonets glisten in the sun. They're honeys of fighters."

Meanwhile, our medics were going forward with stretchers and morphine to care for the wounded women and children who were lying in the cellars in the town of Lagone. It all made quite a spectacle.

The principal trouble with newspaper war stories is that they are true and still give a false impression of battle. Probably the hero story, more than any other, is responsible for this falsification through truth. Hero stories are insidious because they are true. These things do happen because everything happens in battle. There is nothing too fantastic to happen except finding a pin-up girl in your slit trench.

But the fact that these things happen doesn't mean a battle is like that. A battle doesn't have the adventurous-hero feeling. It's too exhausting. There's no dash and devil-may-care feeling left in a man after he's been sleeping on the ground for weeks, soaked and frozen. He's too sick from eating nothing but rations and is jarred and jolted and edgy from shell and mortar fire. He just isn't in a hero mood. If he comes out a hero it's usually not because he did anything brilliant; he probably got caught in a series of circumstances which came out unexpectedly well.

So, in a sense, I always felt a little reluctant to write a hero story. And yet situations did occasionally arise which were so dramatic that a writer couldn't withstand the temptation. During the siege of this same town of Lagone there was a classic. I was in the regimental command post in the little town of Filignano.

Two kilometers ahead in the midnight mud and rain, lying on his belly and dragging a telephone, Private George E. Clark, a Choctaw Indian of Shawnee, Oklahoma, whispered into the transmitter:

"Captain, Captain, don't ring, Captain, they're right here with me. Just whistle real low into the phone if you want me."

Back in the command post, Captain Vercil Patterson, of Edmond, Oklahoma, told the huddle of anxious officers:

"My observer's got himself into the middle of the Germans. We'll be getting something now."

And then the voice of Private Clark: "Battery left a hundred yards. We are on some machine guns."

In the command post we could hear the Jerry guns "b-r-r-r-p, b-r-r-r-r-, b-r-r-r-p," those sudden squirts, liquid in their speed, and then Patterson was ordering his 155 howitzers a hundred yards

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to the left, and in a few seconds we heard four reports as quick as a carpenter can pound a nail.

It was the climactic moment of a hectic, bewildering five hours of night fighting with all the hazards and sudden turns of unexpected fortunes of war, marked by one of the most savage although restricted night counterattacks the Germans had launched in recent weeks.

I arrived in the little town of Filignano just at dusk and just as the Germans threw in a sudden barrage of artillery fire, shrapnel from the first round of which shattered the windshield of our jeep, driven by Sergeant Jack Foisie of *Stars and Stripes*, a Berkeley, California, boy.

In the battalion command post were Major Merlin O. Tryon, a former commercial education teacher of Gila Junior College near Phoenix, commanding the battalion; Lieutenant Arnold D. Hechtman, of Brooklyn; Captain Strong, Staff Sergeant Lloyd Getchell, of Hood River, Oregon; and the colonel, from New York City. They were discussing the prospects of a heckling enterprise which was at the moment being launched up forward by Lieutenant Johnny Crafaik, of New York City. This was the most ambitious of a number of night patrols that were out to shoot up, blow up, and mix up the Germans.

Crafaik's men were just going down our most forward slope with their weapons. But what we didn't know and what they didn't know was that the German at the same moment was launching a project of his own to shoot up, blow up, and mix up the Americans.

Three or four Germans with machine pistols were at the same time driving a herd of goats down their slope immediately opposite. As they approached our lines the noise of the goats alarmed our outposts, who opened fire. To complete the illusion of an attack the German goat herders let go with their machine pistols. The sound of the firing drifted down to us at the command post.

This encounter discouraged Crafaik's men from pursuing their project. They retired from the hill to wait for a better night. The German goat herders, meanwhile, ran back and forth firing their machine pistols and driving the goats slowly forward—a diversion on our left flank before their Sunday punch on our right.

At the height of this engagement between their goats and our K Company, Jerry smashed in with his main attack on our I Company, which was led by Lieutenant Harvey Pollard, of Okmulgee, Oklahoma. More than two hundred rounds of artillery and mortar fire

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smashed down on Pollard's hillside position in the space of a few minutes, followed by a fierce German infantry advance which drove a salient into the line and threatened to be a success.

It was at this point that Private Clark came into the picture when he telephoned Captain Patterson that he felt he should go forward. In the rain and dark, he said, he could see virtually nothing from his observation post.

"Use your own conscience," said Patterson, reminding him that a dead observer is no observer and that Clark's first lieutenant had been knocked out three nights earlier when he went too far forward.

"I'm going forward," said Clark, and crept out of his slit trench, clutching his telephone box and dragging the wires behind him.

In the wet blackness, unable to see, he scrambled too far in advance until suddenly he heard German voices around him and called into the phone that Patterson should not ring. But from within the German attacking force, obscured by the night, he was in a perfect position to observe and direct fire.

His first success was on the German machine-gun concentration. From then on he directed shells from three batteries into every German concentration.

Between the artillery fire and our infantry resistance the attack was broken up. The Germans were surrounded or driven back.

There were different types of hero stories. A good example of a man being caught up in a series of circumstances which carried him inexorably to heroism without his having to do anything heroic was provided by Private Billy Miller, of Peoria, Illinois, a new replacement in the 36th Division.

It happened on Billy's first day in combat. He'll probably never get over it. It was like breaking the bank at Monte Carlo the first time you play roulette. I went down to see Billy the morning he came in and asked how it happened.

"My company attacked a hill," he said, "and took a prisoner. They sent me and a couple of other soldiers to the rear with the Jerry and a couple of wounded Americans. It was night and a German patrol behind our lines ambushed us.

"They had us," said Billy, "and we hollered, 'Kamerad,' and I also told our prisoner to holler 'Kamerad.' He hollered 'Kamerad,' and all sorts of things and they stopped machine-pistoling us. I sent the prisoner up to arrange the surrender."

Two Germans came down and got Billy. Then he was in the

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midst of a lot of whispering Germans scattered over a moonlit hill. He never saw the other Americans again nor the German prisoner. One section of Germans went one way. Billy's section went another.

"They took me to a cave," he said, "where there was a fire and some candles, so we had light. We didn't have anything to eat except some hard Italian bread and some vino they found. They seemed happy and sang a lot of songs. I never sang. I was too damned scared. I sat in a corner. I never drank any vino, even."

Billy's twenty-one and had never had any experiences like this. A year earlier he was rolling hardtack dough in the Thomas and Clark bakery, Peoria.

"The German lieutenant, who was about twenty-three, came up to me," said Billy, "and said they were going to send me to a prisoner's cage in Rome. I said, 'Oh, God, Lieutenant, we can't get off this hill, we'll all be shot. The Americans are all around this hill. They'll kill us.' He asked me where the Americans were and I told him they had taken the hill and we were surrounded. That was a stall. I figured that we would have the hill pretty soon and then we really would be surrounded.

"The German lieutenant said, 'Hmmmm,' and went back to his singing.

"It was the damnedest thing," said Billy. "On this patrol behind our lines they'd brought an accordion but they didn't even bring any food. They'd found this bread and vino in an Italian farmhouse. But they played the accordion all night long and sang to it and seemed very happy. I don't know what they sang except that twice the lieutenant came over to me and said they were singing the German national anthem."

In the morning, Billy said, they moved out of the cave and crept down the hill to an abandoned Italian farmhouse. They found some more wine and bread there. Before they ate or drank they always invited Billy to eat or drink first, which is very rich in humor. Not to take any credit away from these big-hearted Germans, but once I was surrounded on a hillside in Sicily with a German prisoner and the worse it looked the more I offered the prisoner to eat and smoke. In any case, they all lay up in the house all day, drinking wine, singing to the accordion, and treating Billy very, very nice—eye to the future.

"Did they drink much, Billy?" I asked.

"Christ, they were drinking every time you looked around," he said.

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In the evening the lieutenant had another talk with Billy about taking him through the lines and sending him to a prisoner's cage in Rome.

"I stalled him the best I could," said Billy. "I said they'd murder us all on the way out, and the lieutenant said, 'Ja, ja.' The rest of the time nobody paid much attention to me. I'd go outside and take a leak without a guard. I thought of trying to escape but I figured they'd have an outpost who'd shoot me, and besides, I figured if I could stall a little longer the hill would really get surrounded and I'd be all right."

That night the Germans sang and drank again all night long to the accordion. In the morning the lieutenant had another talk with Billy about taking him through the lines, fishing for information.

"I told him it was no use," said Billy. "I told him we'd never make it, and he asked me to show him where the Americans were on the hill. We went out in the garden and I pointed and said, 'The Americans are there.' We looked and sure enough we could see some Americans about six or seven hundred yards away. I still don't think we had the whole hill surrounded, but the lieutenant was convinced."

They went back inside the house and the lieutenant took off his holster with its P-38 pistol and handed it to Billy. Then he reached to the wall and took down his machine pistol and gave it to Billy, and then he raised his hands and said:

"Search me. We are your prisoners. You are not our prisoner any more."

Billy said, "I searched him and he didn't have anything but a pocketbook and I didn't look inside that. Then he told his men to lay down their arms and form in a column of twos. The men heaped up seven P-38 pistols, nine pair of binoculars, and a lot of other stuff, and the lieutenant commanded them to follow in column of twos. I took his machine pistol and told them to carry their arms for me, and then I led them to where we had seen the Americans. We didn't run into any outposts. The first Americans we saw were a couple of wiremen working over a telephone line. They wanted to know what it was all about. Then we went on and I turned the prisoners in."

Billy made only one mistake which distinguished him from a veteran soldier. When he got to a regiment he turned in all the loot, when he could have sold this stuff for well over a thousand dollars to non-combat soldiers in Naples. Of course, that's against the mili-

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tary law, but loot's loot, isn't it, and always has been, so long as it doesn't come from civilians? And how was it that General Montgomery once described the good soldier? Look it up sometime.

There's just one thing more.

"Are you married?" I asked Billy.

"No," he said.

"Is there a girl?"

"I know a girl named Peggy Mitchen in Macon, Georgia," he said.

"Let's send a message to her," I said. "What'll it be?"

He thought a long time and got kind of red so that his little blond mustache looked even blonder.

"Come on," I said. "What'll it be?"

"I don't know," he said.

So that's another kind of hero story.

CHAPTER XXV

The Cassino Attack Begins

DURING THE FIRST PHASE of the attack on Cassino and across the Rapido I was the only correspondent allowed forward. This unexpected privilege came about by accident. Since I was attached to the Air Forces, the Army Public Relations would give me no transport. To get to the front and back I had to hitch rides. This was tiresome work. To keep travel time to a minimum I used to go forward for days at a stretch, thumbing my way with bedroll, typewriter and zipper bag. This infuriated me and I felt it was an indignity upon the *Times*, the only West Coast paper which had a correspondent in the Mediterranean area. But all's well that ends well. It so happened that when the big attack began across the Rapido and on Cassino I was already living with a regiment of the 34th Division. Since I was pretty well housebroken and was in the way only about 50 per cent of the time, the colonel was content I should stay. But other correspondents were forbidden forward. This was to be a serious and difficult attack co-ordinated with the landing at Anzio. The 34th, which was never especially news-conscious, took no chance that efficiency would be hampered by an excess of correspondents, even though it might mean good publicity.

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Moreover, I had just recently been purchased by one of the news services for national distribution and was able to offer coverage in every hamlet, town, and city, a fact which I mentioned nine or ten times a day casually but clearly. It was a great boost to my morale to have this press service behind me. And, further, to have the battle exclusively my own so far as eyewitness news was concerned caused me to square off for big things and nearly get killed from time to time. I thought I was getting famous.

The build-up to the attack followed the familiar pattern. Then there was the last restless peace when everything was done and we were only waiting for the hour. The final afternoon I spent in a farmhouse on a hilltop with a machine-gun section. It was a typical nervous, giggly wait with nothing to do but fidget and worry. Once during a period of dead silence I remember asking: "Well, how do you feel?"

It was about as sensible as asking a bride four hours beforehand how she feels about what's going to happen on her wedding night. I don't quite remember the answers. There was a lot of snickering, and someone pointed to a replacement who'd never been in combat and said: "Ask him how he feels." The replacement squawked hastily: "Just like the others. Just like the others. I feel just like they do."

"He means he's so God damned scared he can't stand it," said the section leader.

In the twilight we moved down to the Rapido valley, following country lanes where the Italians lounged on stone walls, smiling and giving cheery salutes and obviously eager to break into their customary exuberant and rather servile demonstrations of loyalty to the Four Freedoms, the American Way, and the Atlantic Charter. The demeanor of the soldiers discouraged it. They walked without talking and paid no heed even to the kids who ran alongside, shouting and jumping and asking for candy. The very loveliness of the evening, which had a feel of summer, intensified the nervous before-the-battle feeling of apprehension and depression.

Darkness settled while we came down off the hill. When we got to the command post, a stone farmhouse, I could recognize people only by their voices. The colonel was inside prowling about with a flashlight, supervising the installation of the phones. We loitered on the road, while the wiremen spooled their telephone lines forward and rearward. When the colonel came out he made a few remarks in the brisk, lighthearted, encouraging voice of the profes-

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sional soldier, which would remind you of the cheerful bedside manner of a surgeon about to disembowel someone. Then there was a revealing moment when we were standing alone. He startled me by suddenly dropping his brisk professionalism and saying in a flat, discouraged tone: "I don't know how many men I'm going to lose." That gave me an idea what the Rapido would be like.

An officer stepped up the next moment and the colonel's voice resumed its cheerful, military bedside manner.

The barrage came on as though someone had flipped a switch. First the flashes—so brilliant and intense that the landscape flickered like an imperfect movie. Seconds later the thundering concussions bounded upon us, becoming confused in their own echoes, until we seemed to be standing at the bottom of a sea of hoarse rolling sound.

A mile and a half ahead on the rocky hill where the German lay waiting the red shellbursts stabbed up and down and across like the lights on a telephone switchboard. The barrage went on and on, beautiful, but the violence, the wind of the concussions, the shaking of the ground, and the weird play of lights were tiring and disturbing. And boring after the first moments of wonder.

We went inside, where the banging was damped down and the regimental staff was busy in the candlelight, talking on phones and examining maps. The infantry was just shoving off, walking behind the barrage, which lifted and advanced every few minutes. The first telephone call from the attackers came in a very few minutes. The colonel listened and then shouted into the mouthpiece: "Who started that rumor?" He handed the phone to Major Everett Thomas, of Minneapolis, our artillery liaison officer, saying: "He's trying to tell me our shells are falling short among our own men."

Major Thomas indignantly shouted into the phone: "Don't you know that's an old Jerry trick? As soon as we lay a barrage he drops some shells behind it to catch our advancing troops."

The men quickly got into mine fields and were crucified by mortar and machine-gun fire while they floundered about, blowing themselves up. In a short time the attack had been stopped.

It was hard to understand why we didn't have better intelligence about the location of the mine fields. Patrols were supposed to have been out previous nights spotting them. Perhaps the fields were freshly laid, or possibly, I suspected, some patrols had not done their inspection but had merely said they had done it.

It was decided to attack again, and another barrage was called. It took time to lay it on, and while we waited I noticed it was get-

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ting very cold following the warm day. This was late in January; we only had such stuff with us as we had been able to carry ourselves, meaning one blanket, typewriter, and zipper bag, in my case. I was quickly frozen stiff, even though sitting wrapped in my blanket Indian fashion. Until then I had been sleeping in seven blankets.

We ate our K rations while waiting for the barrage to begin again, and I lit the empty boxes in the fireplaces, creating a bright blaze and annoying the colonel intensely, as the chimney had a hole in it, which gave off a glow.

The guns finally started shooting again. After an interval the colonel got the battalion commander on the phone and the next thing he was saying was:

"My God, man, you're losing advantage of the barrage! You should have started pushing immediately. The purpose of that barrage is to save lives."

The officer at the other end was evidently arguing that the situation was impossible.

"We'll have another barrage," said the colonel. "Then you've got to push."

He seemed quite ruthless. It was apparent from the information we'd already received that the men were running into mines, barbed wire, heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, and some artillery, and I felt he was being unreasonable.

It was not until later that I realized it was not the colonel who was ruthless. He was under tremendous pressure from above.

We had another bombardment and the poor infantry went out early this time because we could hear that cold-blooded chatter of the German machine guns working them over. There was more telephoning. And then the infantry had been stopped again.

It was very discouraging. The colonel became sharp with the battalion commander at the other end of the telephone line and demanded progress. We had another barrage, and every minute or two, it seemed, the colonel was on the line heckling the battalion commander to know how the men were getting ahead. Finally he got an answer that one platoon had crossed the Rapido and was holding a small section of ground.

The colonel immediately called Division and told a general that he had a few men across the river. Division apparently took this as a negligible performance and demanded more action. It was a decisive period in the Battle of Italy, if you remember. We had just landed a large amphibious force at Anzio, whose success was in large

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measure dependent on our breaking through at Cassino and relieving German pressure on them. We were committed to making a supreme effort, more or less regardless of cost. Unfortunately we had a very badly tired division as our only attacking force at Cassino. They weren't giving all that a fresh division might have given.

With urgency in mind, the colonel called on the tanks next, asking them to precede the infantry, run over mine fields to explode the mines, and give cover fire against the German machine-gun posts. After a long wait we heard the tanks rumbling down from their hiding place in a grove to the rear. Just before they passed the command post the colonel gave his battalion leaders a call and said cynically: "The tanks are on the way. I suppose they'll chew up my telephone wires. Is there any last message?"

During the next two weeks we were out of communication about half the time because the tanks were roaming around cutting our wires. It sometimes seemed to communications men as if they were more damaging to us than the enemy.

There was more waiting after the tanks passed. Then we began getting reports by radio. The tanks were having a bad time. The German, who is a cunning fellow, had prepared for a tank attack by piling up water behind a dam farther up the Rapido.

He had unloosed this, not down the river bed, but through a network of irrigation canals on our side of the river. The tanks were bogged.

It was early morning by this time, and next it was gray daylight and everyone looked haggard. I slept a little and then went forward to get an idea of the terrain.

It was certainly not joy in battle that took me forward. It was a kind of compelling curiosity. Battle sometimes hypnotized me like a cobra hypnotizes a chicken. There is a dreadful fascination in knowing that a fifteen-minute walk down a pretty poplar-lined country lane will take you into the midst of it. Just a stroll. Men were going back and forth along the lane all the time. I could join any of them at any time.

Unfortunately there's never anyone to stop you at the front. Once you get in the forward combat zones they'll take you within grenade-throwing distance. If you are ever told by someone that he went forward as far as was permitted and then they wouldn't let him go farther, give him a funny look. Quite the contrary. A visitor becomes embarrassed turning down the many opportunities to get killed that are thrust upon him.

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With Ken Dixon of the Associated Press I once spent three days, while with the 36th Division, warding off an opportunity to go on a tank attack. We managed not to go and have been congratulating ourselves, as that was the day thirteen out of sixteen tanks were knocked out.

In any case, sometimes you go and sometimes you don't, depending on your hunches, but always there is this hypnotic drag pulling you toward battle.

The aggravating thing is that you never quite see what you want to see. It's tantalizing.

I followed the lane down toward the Rapido. It had ditches on both sides and the ditches were full of soldiers lying on their backs, waiting their turn to go forward. The German was shelling the road, and from time to time I joined the soldiers in their ditches. Farther down the lane I ran into small-arms fire and lay for a time in a muddy depression not far from a fellow Californian, whose name I dutifully took, intending to use it in a story, although I never did. He was Lieutenant Vincent Kelley, of Sacramento, who once had gone to Los Angeles City College. I got this all down in good shape, but forget now what else he told me.

We were bombarding the German positions with smoke shells and after a time had his snipers and machine gunners pretty well obscured. I dashed for a forward observation post and made it.

This post, which was also being used as a battalion command post, symbolized the whole miserable grinding uphill Italian campaign, where nearly our every move was as plain to the enemy as if it were diagramed on a classroom blackboard. The post was a classic example of what was meant by that phrase, "Jerry's staring down our throat." Except when his positions were smoked up he could see us as easily as you can sit on a hill and see a family playing croquet in their back yard.

The post consisted of a roofless Italian house which had been beaten by high explosives until it looked like a rotted tooth. The walls had been knocked so low that there was no necessity to look out the windows. A man could look right over the top of the walls.

The house's only function was to provide a sort of super foxhole where the observers could crouch by their telephones and be protected to a degree against shrapnel and machine-gun bullets.

The only safer places were hundreds of yards back and trees obscured the view. Trees were no obstruction at this point because the Germans had cut down all the trees so that their machine gun-

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ners would have a clear sweep on our advancing infantry. They had left an ugly stumpy no man's land where we could see our troops (Japanese boys from Honolulu at this particular place) going forward, often on their hands and knees, flattening out when they heard the live, angry, and terrifying cackle of machine-gun bullets. Their only real protection was the chemical smoke, but even that kept thinning and blowing away.

The saving grace for everybody was that the German had so many perfect full-view targets in the neighborhood that he couldn't concentrate on any of them. He had to rotate. He'd worked over the observation post several times already that day, and on one occasion one of those unaccountable near-miracles had happened. Private Merle Brooks, of Knoxville, Tennessee, was crouching in the front room peering at the German position when a mortar shell dropped in the room with him.

It went off with a concussion that bounced Brooks like dice in a shaker, but neither killed nor injured him. He picked himself up, looked out at the world through a face that had suddenly become a mask of stone dust, and walked out of the house to lie down on the grass. As soon as he lay down a machine-gun bullet kicked some dirt in his face, so he picked himself up again and staggered back into the house.

About an hour after I arrived Jerry had another turn at this target. There were about a dozen of us altogether behind the house. I was crouched with Captain Young Kim, of Los Angeles, a Korean boy, and Second Lieutenant John Reid, of Orange, California. We were in the midst of quite an enthusiastic mutual admiration society about all three living in the only place on earth where life is bearable, when two mortar shells dropped within a few feet. They came silently and we didn't even have a chance to duck, but fell all of a heap after it was too late. We grinned foolishly and it was several seconds before Lieutenant David Redle, of Sheridan, Wyoming, thought to ask: "Who got hit?"

One man held up a bloody hand and somebody said to him: "You got hit in the back too."

"I don't know," said the boy, who was dazed.

"Yeah, you're hit in the back."

One of his buddies dumped sulfanilimide powder on his cuts and he set off to an aid station on a trot. A few minutes later someone shouted: "Here's another one."

He was looking in an irrigation ditch that ran by the house. Major

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C. Clough, Jr., of Saugerties, New York, stepped quickly out of the house when he heard this and said: "Is he badly hurt?"

Kim, stooping over the ditch, said, "Yes, he's got it bad." Next he said, "He's dead."

Apparently the boy had been struck by a splinter through the heart and by instinct had dived for the ditch in the few seconds of life that remained to him.

The men shook it off without further mention.

Meanwhile the troops ahead were pressing the attack. It was heartbreaking. They had made their way across the stumpy wasteland and bogs, which stretched three hundred yards farther forward than we were, and had gotten down into the twelve-foot-deep culvert where the Rapido ran. Here they were pinned down by machine-gun and mortar fire and handicapped by the tall steep sides of the culvert. Scaling parties went over the top on ladders and immediately came up against barbed wire which was hung with booby traps. While they tried to disarm the boobies and cut through the barbed wire the Germans machine-gunned and mortared them. They had the dubious protection of the smoke, which swirled and blew in a light wind, but the enemy had studied his fields of fire so he could shoot blindly, even when he was smoked up. Our men melted away and finally came back into the culvert, when the captain in command reported the situation by telephone to Major Clough, who was in our observation post. The major was actually white-faced. He had to tell the men to go ahead regardless of the losses.

"You've got to push," he said. "You've got to push."

The captain in the culvert must have protested, because the major said again and again, "You've got to push. I'm sorry, you've got to push."

They pushed again and got a few men on a triangle of land on the far side, at cost of more casualties. I can assure you this wasn't playtime in Italy. When the major laid down the phone he said: "It's pretty hard on G.I. Joe, isn't it?"

From that point forward the battle emphasis shifted to the other side of the river, where there was a sort of hell's hundred acres of pasture land with a cemetery along one boundary where the Germans fought from the tombs; a barracks on a corner which shellfire had burst like a hoop-sprung barrel; and the river Rapido on the third boundary. It was all swept by fiendish machine-gun fire. The Germans were dug into holes in a rocky knob known as the "pimple" just behind the pasture where we couldn't get them out by artillery.

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When our men lifted themselves out of ditches to advance the machine guns mowed them down. When they tried to advance at night they got into mine fields, the explosions would give them away, and the machine guns would rake the area. It was truly a discouraging situation.

Toward evening I returned to the command post and witnessed a peculiar little drama. A general swept into the room in a state of icy anger and gave the colonel a wicked tongue lashing, threatening to remove him.

The night before, if you remember, the colonel had reported to the general that a platoon had gotten across the river. It turned out later that they had not gotten across the river at all—or at best hardly at all. The officer in command apparently simply couldn't stand to see his men massacred, so he reported they had crossed when they hadn't. The colonel in turn had reported to the general, and the general had reported to a higher general, and so forth, and now the kickback was coming all down the line. I huddled there unbeknownst and listened while I heard a full colonel catch merry hell. It was an interesting experience.

It ended in the replacement of the officer who had made the original report. He stayed on as second in command, however, and five hours later the man who replaced him was killed. So he took over again and by that time other matters were in people's minds and he was left permanently in command. He was a good officer, anyway, and if he behaved wrongly he did it for his men. But I doubt if he ever does it again.

There was something comic about the whole incident. The general who gave the colonel the tongue lashing had undoubtedly been sharply reprimanded himself, and probably the general above him had been reprimanded, and so forth and so forth.

With so much at stake, the battle in every detail was being followed with deadly interest clear up to General Mark W. Clark.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Cassino Attack Continues

After three days the regiment had been worn to a bloody stub. I shifted to another, which took over while the first regiment had

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a brief rest. We were making the attack with only one regiment at a time, which proved not to be enough, but there was nothing to be done about it. The landing at Anzio had sucked off possible reserves. A fact worth remembering every time you read that we're diverting German troops from other duties is that we're also diverting ours.

I was rather groggy from loss of sleep by this time and scarcely recall the sequence of events. The principal thing I remember was that the regiment was strangely optimistic. They were a hot outfit which had recently chewed the Germans up, and they expected to repeat. At least the regimental officers did. The poor old Joe who does the fighting rarely indulges in optimism. He expects the worst. It was supposed to be a secret that the outfit was coming into the line, but in the command post they would have liked to put it on a loud-speaker. They thought it would sap the enemy's confidence. I don't know. Without knowing whom they were fighting, the Germans did pretty well. They gave the new regiment quite a pasting.

It became obvious that we would have to get tanks across the Rapido. The German positions were far too strong to be taken by such a thin regiment-by-regiment attack. Perhaps if we could have afforded to send in wave after wave in the Russian style we might have made it with foot soldiers only. But we didn't have the men, and neither is that our style, although sometimes it has seemed that one quick bloody brutal slaughter which does the trick might be more humane than our more careful attacks which grind a few lives off a division every day without much gain to show for it. We don't seem reconciled to heavy loss of life on any single day, although we accept the same loss with great equanimity when distributed over a period and even if less has been accomplished. There is still an inclination, even in the Army, to think of our soldiers not as soldiers but as American boys whose lives must be cherished. We become too cautious and in the end defeat our own purpose of saving those lives. Our actions, as Shakespeare put it, are sometimes "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." We haven't yet reconciled ourselves to the disagreeable facts of infantry life. The Germans in their callous way have best described the infantry. They coarsely called them cannon fodder. I don't suppose this meant they considered the infantry something to be sacrificed for the wanton pleasure of generals. It was their unpleasant Germanic way of expressing an obvious fact. If you will examine infantry casualty totals in a division

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which has seen combat, you will see it is not an inaccurate description. I hope my sons join some other branch of the service when their time comes.

The tanks were difficult to use at the Rapido because of the German-made bogs. Before we could get armor across the river it was necessary to build a causeway which would be strong enough to support Shermans. Fifteen hundred engineers, which is a colossal number, were hurried into the area and went to work under shellfire. It had to be impromptu, makeshift construction. There was no time to figure out weights and pressures and foundations logarithmically. They just did the best they could in a hurry. The first attempts failed and we lost a lot of tanks to the bogs. After one attempt at a crossing I went forward in a Sherman with our tank commander, Lieutenant Colonel Harry W. Sweeting, of Chicago. Six tanks had gotten across, but the rest had failed. We arrived at a scene of chaotic desolation. At least ten tanks were in sight at one place, some on their sides, some on their noses, all with the slowly moving waters running through their insides. The dry upper halves were occupied by doughboys taking shelter from mortar and artillery fire, and at the same time protecting the tanks from marauding German patrols which had been coming across the river at night to burn them. On the way forward we encountered one of the most advanced major generals you will ever hear of, the commanding officer of the 34th Division. He was close enough to the fighting to permit a sniper to work him over while he stood beside our tank talking to Colonel Sweeting. As soon as those bullets began zipping by our driver, Captain Jack Brown, of Louisville, Ohio, and I buttoned down the big steel hoods of our forward gun turrets and sat there comfortably while the sniper sniped. I don't know what the major general did. Perhaps he hit the dirt. There isn't much else to do.

On the other side of the river the six tanks which had managed to make the crossing were roaming up and down, tramping the German mine fields, charging up to the cemetery, and firing point-blank into the crypts. They were leading a very active life over there. Once across, there was no turning back. It was a one-way road and it wasn't long before our tanks were being stalked by German self-propelled guns, which are a form of tank specially designed to destroy tanks. They carry a heavier gun, which shoots a higher-velocity shell than the 75s which our Shermans mount.

This tank stuff was especially exciting because we could hear it

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on the radio. Some I caught and some I missed. While we were down in the bog inspecting the damage the tanks across the river had their first encounter with a self-propelled gun, hereafter to be called an SP. Everything goes by initials in the Army. One of these ugly SPs evidently had crept out from behind a hiding place in the barracks and was leveling on one of ours, because suddenly over the radio came a shout: "Look out, Captain. Look out. He's right over by the corner." The warning came too late. The German cut loose and scored a hit on the American. I later talked to a member of the crew, Sergeant Glee H. Maude, of Kansas City, who said:

"I heard someone on the radio saying not to go over there because of SP. Just then we were hit. After the first hit we decided to stay in the tank and fight it out. Then he hit us again and we bailed out. I remember the captain [Captain French Lewis] hitting the ground alongside of me. We were exposed to machine-gun fire but got behind the tank and wormed our way out. One man was killed and one was wounded."

After this encounter Colonel Sweeting got on the radio and ordered that the next time an SP showed itself at least three of our tanks were to charge it "hell for leather, shooting, and if you don't get it, then ram it."

Unfortunately we soon didn't have three tanks across the river with which to charge hell for leather, shooting. All but two, as I remember, were knocked out by SPs and anti-tank guns, which would creep up on them from two directions, either coming out of Cassino or coming out of the little town of Cairo. Meanwhile we knocked out three SPs, I believe.

One SP got in the barracks at the Cassino side of the pasture and raised merry hell not only with tanks but also with our troops. We had several plans to destroy it. One was to send an ambushing patrol across the river farther down to mine the road leading to Cassino. When the SP waddled back for ammunition and gasoline it would be blown up. Another plan was to locate anti-tank guns and tank destroyers so they could fire point-blank into the barracks. The first was never attempted because of the anti-personnel mines the Germans had strewn along the river bank, and the second failed because the SP was dug so deep in the rubble of the barracks. It offered no target.

We finally had to get it out the hard way. After sundown the infantry sent in a company to clean out the barracks.

The Germans had machine-gun nests spotted through the bar-

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racks, but in the dark it's hard to shoot accurately and we were able to infiltrate sufficient men to make them surrender. Meanwhile two bazooka teams were stalking the SP, but it apparently became uneasy at being in the barracks with our infantry in the dark. Its engines were heard and it pulled out.

The next day our surviving two tanks were still wandering around on the other side of the flat and Colonel Sweeting, I believe, managed to get across himself in his own tank. We could keep pretty good track of what was going on by hanging around the radio. This tank play was a good deal more exciting than listening to a football game by radio. It was mostly done in code, which was at first difficult to understand.

"Peter Lunchbox," you'd hear the colonel's voice. "This is Easy Lunchbox. Over."

The colonel was Easy Lunchbox and he was calling one of his tank commanders known as Peter Lunchbox. "Over" meant that the colonel was through speaking until he had an acknowledgment from Peter Lunchbox. When he had the acknowledgment he would go ahead, saying:

"Peter Lunchbox, this is Easy Lunchbox. Have Sweet Dreams in our original area. Over."

Sweet Dreams was the code name for the surgeon, so the deduction was that someone had been hurt. These things were explained to me as they came over the radio by Captain Robert Rydman, of Omaha, Nebraska. The surgeon, he said, had an armored (not armed) half track with big red crosses on it in which he could go onto the battlefield and pull out wounded men. In case he didn't trust Jerry not to shoot he had the privilege of calling on our chemical mortar company to smoke up the enemy's observation.

One interesting thing we heard was the colonel calling all tanks and warning them not to shoot at unidentified targets, which probably meant that our attacking infantry and the German defending infantry by that time were so intermingled that there was danger of a serious mistake. Just after this order was issued somebody who identified himself as Able Lunchbox came breathlessly on the radio asking permission to shoot at some Jerries who were dropping out the back window of a two-story house.

"I identify them positively," he said.

The colonel told him to go ahead and shoot.

Sometimes, Rydman said, the Germans have been known to come in on our wave length, giving phony orders, even mimicking voices.

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When we were really hurting them they have been known to break in and order the shooting stopped.

"We are firing on our own men. We are firing on our own men," they would say, or some such thing.

Late in the afternoon we had a lull and I went back up the hill to get some blankets I had left. On reaching the top, I expected to be questioned intensively about the battle, but our troops up there were all agog about something else. Crown Prince Umberto had just paid the village a visit.

"I wish you'd been here," exclaimed a lieutenant. "He kissed babies, the people clapped, and my sergeant got so interested he tripped over a wire and fell into a manure pit. What did you see today?"

I always cite this when people at home ask me if the country isn't disgustingly uninterested in the war.

"We don't even know there's a war going on over here, do we?" they ask.

Well, to tell you the truth, you don't know there's a war going on over there, either, except when you're in the midst of it. I never remember being excited about a battle during the periods when I was comfortably back in Naples.

This expedition up the hill also illustrates how hard it is to know what's going on in a battle even when you're on the spot. I had been positively assured that I would have time to get up the hill, get my blankets, and come down again before there was any more action. But by the time I had gotten back down, a matter of an hour and a half, practically the whole damn crossing of the Rapido had been accomplished. We'd won a great victory which I'd missed.

I was highly browned off, but at the same time I was the only reporter in the area so I didn't feel too bad. What happened was that Colonel Sweeting, leading twenty-six tanks, had made a new and successful attempt to cross the Rapido, succeeding in a way that surprised not only the enemy but himself. Our twenty-six Shermans suddenly hoisted themselves onto the flat at a new crossing and began running wild across the mine fields, booby-trapped barbed-wire entanglements, and German machine-gun nests.

Our own foot soldiers, dazed and tired, were at first too bewildered to understand what had happened. For a few minutes success of the attack was jeopardized when they failed to get out of the ditches and slit trenches and follow up the advantage the sudden appearance of the tanks had created. Then, according to

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officers on the field, an electric shock seemed to go through them. They rose and cleaned out the machine-gun nests in the cemetery while the tanks poured lead in all directions to keep the enemy from firing back. Then, as the tanks moved across mine fields to the base of the rocky knob where the Germans had built formidable defenses, the infantry followed in long files, walking in the tracks where the mines had been exploded. With the tanks squatted at the base of the knob, spraying it with lead, they went up in swarms, taking over.

Captain Rydman, who was on the radio when the tanks first got across, gave a dramatic description of the attack. The first thing he heard was the colonel's voice saying:

"O.K., boys, we're across. Now let's get the bastards out."

Apparently the tanks formed up then and swept into the cemetery, neutralizing the Germans in the tombs. The next thing Rydman heard was the colonel calling, "Well, what the hell's holding up the infantry?"

This was when the infantry was still so astonished it hadn't come up out of its slit trenches. The next word from the colonel, according to Rydman, was, "Jesus Christ, let's get these boys up. There's nothing here."

To prove to the infantry that the battle had really taken a different turn, he stood on his tank. That brought the infantry up, and a few minutes later their commanding officer, Lieutenant John L. Powers, of Flushing, New York, got the colonel commanding the regiment on the telephone.

"We are on top of the hill, sir—*make that S.O.B. raise his hands!*"

"What's that?" exclaimed the colonel.

"Just as I started talking to you a prisoner popped out of a hole," said Powers.

On the tank radio Colonel Sweeting was shouting triumphantly:

"We're getting so many prisoners we're giving them away. We hand 'em a white flag and tell 'em which way to go. Don't even give 'em a guard."

By this time it was dark and the situation became confused. The tanks could no longer see to give cover fire and the Germans began coming out of their holes, sometimes to surrender but more often to throw grenades. Our men on the flat were being blown up by mines and it was extremely difficult for the litter-bearers to reach them without being blown up themselves. No ambulances had been able to get across the river, so the long carry necessarily slowed

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down the rescue of the wounded, who lay in the dark, crying, "Medics, medics," or "Help me, help me." The tanks grinding around in the dark had to keep constantly on the alert to avoid running over our dead and unconscious wounded.

At dawn the situation was still confused. Tanks were wandering around at the base of the knob watching for enemy movement while our soldiers crept among the boulders, flushing out the enemy. Every so often a German would pop out of a hole and snap a few shots or throw a grenade.

"I saw one Jerry come out of a hole about fifty yards above my tank," said Colonel Sweeting. "He looked around for someone to throw a grenade at. Then he saw my 75 swinging slowly around until it was pointing at him. Up went his hands and three or four others came jumping out of the hole behind him to surrender."

On another occasion, said the colonel, two German heads raised from a hole.

"They peered down at the tanks like a couple of surprised monkeys," he said. "Then another German right behind them was getting ready to do something with a hand grenade. I don't think he could have done much harm, but I decided to let them have it with my 75. I had just drawn a bead on them when they threw up their hands."

The tanks fanned out toward the little town of Cairo. Smoke and mist were so thick in the low spots that Germans and Americans would sometimes be within a few feet of one another before the shooting started.

"We went in with the tanks in the lead," said the colonel, "and the doughboys would come creeping behind. Suddenly a gust of wind would tear a hole in the mist and we would see the Germans. When they saw the tanks they would usually surrender."

I was at tank headquarters on the American side of the river at this time with Major Welborn C. Dolvin, the second in command, who was arranging to resupply the tanks. The normal way is for tanks to come back to their dumps and reload, but because of the bogs this was impossible. The ammunition had to be carried across by K.P.s, mechanics, and drivers. There were no pack boards, so the men had to carry the long shells, one under each arm, wading through mud and marshes under shellfire.

This got the ammunition over but was not feasible for transporting gasoline. About the middle of the day Major Dolvin had to arrange for a convoy of light tanks to go across with gas cans

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strapped on their tops. He led the column himself and took me along as a passenger.

I hitched this ride on an impulse of the moment. My fixed intention had been never to go into a battle in a tank. It had been my observation that every time tanks go into battle there's a disaster. On this occasion I was talking to the major and he said he was going across with gasoline. Before I knew it I had said: "How about my going along?"

"I think it can be arranged," he said.

After that it was too late to draw back. The major had the bow gunner get out. I took his seat and noticed he looked very pleased.

The tank rode beautifully. It was really a lovely feeling going down those country lanes, gently rocking as though we were in a boat. We took roads which ran between deep banks, giving protection against enemy observation. Near the river, however, we had to surface. The whole landscape was swimming in water, which the Germans had been sluicing down. The causeway which the engineers had built was standing up well, however, and we sloshed along. There was just enough haze so I couldn't tell whether the enemy could observe us or not. Apparently not. We got down into the river bed without being shelled. The bed was a good deal drier than the surrounding countryside and offered good protection against observation. The column, rolling fast, traveled perhaps a mile downstream along what was really a man-made culvert, like a flood-control channel. Then we pulled up onto the flat.

The Germans saluted our arrival with a barrage of artillery, and one tank commander was killed. The commanders, who ride in the turrets, never button down the hoods unless the shelling is intolerable. Visibility is so poor with the turret closed that their effectiveness would be largely nullified.

I was under no obligation to look around, however. There was nothing I wanted to see at the moment, so I jerked down the hood and sat shuddering inside, while the shells slammed around us, making the tank jump. We swept across the flat in skirmish line and the major terrified me by calling over the radio: "Attention, everyone. We're going to unload at the base of the mountain. We're going to unload at the base of the mountain." I thought we'd be mortared immediately at the base of the mountain. But everything in a battle seems to move slowly, the enemy as well as ourselves. The Germans did mortar the base of the mountain. But it was just after we had

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left. However, it was an uneasy period, with the major repeating his command to unload at the base of the mountain.

All commands have to be given about seven times because a tank is so noisy that the words are hard to catch over a sometimes not too perfect radio. Often a commander has to bring his tank to a stop so he can hear.

As a tank engagement gets livelier, the conversation on the radio gets livelier, too, and usually becomes unprintable. Furthermore, the code gets people mixed up. And it's not emphatic enough. There'll be sudden switches from code to straight language. You'll hear a command come over first for Charlie Lunchbox to turn to two o'clock, which means bear a bit to the right, but good old Charlie Lunchbox is so busy running his tank that he doesn't turn to two o'clock. The code names are being changed from time to time, too, and he may have forgotten he's Charlie Lunchbox. A louder order will follow, leaving out the code: "Brown, do you hear me? Go right a little."

Old Brown is still busy running his tank, however, and next you'll hear, "God damn it, Brown, go right." About this time Brown gets the order and bears right.

This failure to keep in code can give genuine information to the enemy. During this battle a lieutenant commanding a tank once shouted angrily and profanely in the clear: "I'm out of ammunition, God damn it."

This is just the kind of thing Jerry likes to know. The lieutenant should have said: "Peter Lunchbox, this is Easy Lunchbox. I haven't a cent."

However, that's the way it goes. A battle's such a slapdash, haphazard affair that it's hard for the enemy to take advantage of information quickly, even if he gets it. As I said, we notified the German we were unloading at the base of the pimple, but he failed to get us with his mortars. However, the fact that we expected to catch it certainly speeded the unloading operation. The haste with which the gasoline and oil was unloaded from the roofs of the tanks was amazing and comical. It seemed to fly off the roofs and suddenly be on the ground. I stayed inside the tank myself. As a noncombatant, I wasn't supposed to help, which suited me, although I did summon courage to keep the hood unbuttoned so I could look around.

The first thing that happened when we stopped was an embar-

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rassing request for water. A gaunt, bearded, burning-eyed soldier seemed to rise from the ground.

"Did you bring water for us?" he asked.

It was terrible. We'd never thought of it. It wasn't our duty to bring water. A faraway German sniper whose bullets had that spent zing drove the thirsty soldier back into the ground and I never saw him again.

The battlefield was an amazing and lively spectacle. Behind the wall of the cemetery three of our Shermans crouched like great dogs. The Germans apparently knew they were there, because they were searching back and forth for them with screaming meemies. A quarter of a mile beyond, in a corner of an L-shaped farmhouse, lay the blackened wreckage of a German self-propelled gun which had engaged in a finish fight with one of our tanks. It had been finish for the SP and also finish for one of our Shermans.

In contrast to the violence of the screaming meemies and the gruesome wreckage of the burned-out tanks were our soldiers on the far side of the pasture by the river, who were casually walking along as if nothing were going on at all. One column wasn't carrying weapons, and I made them out as prisoners.

Major Dolvin called my attention to a strung-out column moving at a crouch behind a stone wall at the far end of the pasture. They were advancing on a cluster of stone buildings where Jerry had some machine-gun nests.

From time to time I would hear the voice of Colonel Sweeting on the radio. He was somewhere very close, because Major Dolvin got out of our tank and walked over to talk to him. The colonel seemed to be in high spirits. He was giving many commands and making cracks.

We had tanks hidden all over the pasture. Every so often our driver, Sergeant Lewis Johnson, of Fredericks Hall, Virginia, and our gunner, Sergeant James Overton, of Birmingham, Alabama, would point one out. They were hard to spot, hidden in cowsheds under trees and behind farm buildings.

Johnson and I also tried to spot German machine-gun nests on the pimple above us. They were beautifully concealed. We went over the hill minutely with glasses and succeeded in spotting only one.

After a time Major Dolvin returned from his talk with Colonel Sweeting and climbed back in the turret. By this time the other tanks had unloaded and were hustling for home. We could see them be-

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ing followed across the pasture again by the German artillery. We were about to take off when Captain Edwin Y. Arnold, of Bryan, Texas, walked over to the major and had a long conversation with him which was punctuated throughout by the zipping of a sniper's bullets. Neither of them paid any heed or even hurried their talk.

When they had finished we took off like a shot. As soon as we came under observation Jerry began following us with shells.

Johnson and I were buttoned down, but through the scopes we could see the soldiers ahead of us lowering themselves into ditches. They'd learned by sad experience that, though a tank is a great friend at times, it frequently brings in its train a barrage which seldom hurts the tank but often hurts the G.I. Inside the tank we couldn't hear the shells, but we could feel the jolts, and once we felt the six successive jars of the screaming meemies. Then we were in the river bed, out of observation, which was a very good feeling.

I came across the river on foot the next day to have a look at the fortifications. The Germans had some super-pillboxes defending this section. In one stone farmhouse they had built a little room inside a big room. Between the outer wall of the little room and the inner wall of the big room they dumped crushed rock. We could shell that house all day and never hurt the men inside. The central cell had been fitted with bunks and enough food to last weeks. This post was especially useful because the house had been so caved in by shellfire it seemed nothing could be alive inside. But actually the Germans there never gave up until they were completely surrounded.

Along the base of the hill the Germans had installed portable steel pillboxes. These looked much like the turret of a tank. They completely protected the men inside against small-arms fire and, I imagine, would stop any kind of shrapnel. Nothing but a direct artillery hit would get them, and I can assure you that direct artillery hits on a target that size are extremely few.

In the rocky slopes of the pimple the Germans had dug deep tunnels which led to sizable rooms fitted with bunks and stored with food. These were absolutely invulnerable to shellfire. After we took over, the Germans shelled the area and made several direct hits above some of these dug-in positions, never doing more than jar the occupants.

The noteworthy feature of this point in the Gustav Line, which was probably the most heavily defended point of all, was not the elaborateness of the defenses, but their simplicity. Apart from the

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room within a room in the farmhouse, which itself was not too difficult to construct, there was nothing that a large crew of miners could not have constructed in a very few days. They were simply shafts and chambers inside a rocky mountain. And that was enough. That sort of emplacement is impregnable to shells and probably, to a large extent, impregnable to bombs. Viewing these simple and cheap fortifications was a great lesson in the virtues of emplacements which depend not on tough, expensive construction for their protection but simply on being beneath ground.

CHAPTER XXVII

Cassino Concluded

EVERY THREE or four days I would hoist my bedroll on my shoulder, take my typewriter in my hand and get out on the highway, thumbing. I had to get back to the press camp to unload my stories. It was a partial solace to meet some interesting people on these hitchhiking trips. A Frenchman, recently escaped from France, picked me up on one occasion. On another I was hauled by a pair of Brazilian liaison officers. Back at the press camp I would turn in my firsthand stories on the Rapido and indulge in an orgy of self-congratulation because no other correspondent had been permitted to see the fighting. Making a success of this new syndication was close to my heart. My stories from the Rapido were fresh, exclusive, and authentic, and I came to consider myself a species of journalistic nine-day wonder, especially after a couple of the other correspondents flattered me by making a mildly protesting complaint because Division wouldn't let them forward. Upon hearing this, Lieutenant Colonel Ken Clark, the Fifth Army's Public Relations officer, notified me that such a situation was hardly satisfactory.

"You are not accredited to the Army," he said. "It's certainly not fair that all the accredited reporters should be barred from the fighting and the unaccredited reporter be allowed to see it exclusively."

There was no denying this, but nobody seemed to do anything about it. In any case, Colonel Clark never interfered, and upon my pointing out that a Johnny-come-lately correspondent in the theater was receiving the valuable privilege of riding in Public Relations

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jeeps, he told me I could ride in them, too, providing I wasn't cutting out an accredited correspondent. I was still denied the use of the on-the-spot radio, however, which was a severe handicap, especially as I had a plan to scoop the world on the first entrance of troops into Cassino.

By this time the regiment was back in the battle and I attached myself part time to a battalion commanded by Major Warren Chapman of Nevada City, California, and part time to Lieutenant Colonel Sweeting's tank battalion. These were an interesting pair of officers, both West Pointers and both good leaders.

Chapman, about twenty-eight or -nine years of age, had just taken over the battalion. Nine days earlier he had been in Washington, sitting at a desk. Unexpectedly he got flying orders and found himself on the banks of the Rapido, commanding a hard-bitten, battle-wary, somewhat soured battalion, which was engaged in the hardest fighting of its history. It was a tough spot for a young West Pointer. He was shoved in over some very fine lieutenants and captains who had a terrific background of combat experience. They naturally looked upon this fresh-faced newcomer in his unsoiled clothes as something of a teacher's pet. And he was at a severe handicap. The war, as taught in the books, is so different from the war as fought in the field. He had to move and talk very softly until he began to catch the hang of it. But I must say he handled himself well. I think I was with him almost the first time he was under shellfire and he was a good deal more serene than I was. We were in a command post near the Rapido when Jerry suddenly dumped twenty-one shells in the neighborhood, making the house jump. I was asleep on some straw when the first one came in. By the time five or six more had landed I was too weak to get up. I lay there and watched Chapman, curious to see how he would take it. So far as I could see he showed no alarm, which requires considerable self-control. The "shriek, boom" of a shell coming in close, with a concussion that makes the dust rise from the floor, is enough to cause any man to wince, no matter how experienced. During the next ten days I watched Chapman gradually get a firm grip on his battalion. By the time I left I think he was well respected, although it was human nature that some of his tough junior officers still looked on him as an interloper. It was a great baptism of fire for a young professional soldier. He got a quick seasoning. It had taken him about eight years to get the theory of soldiering. I think it took him about eight days to get the practice. Pretty nearly everything happened during this

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attack across the river and on Cassino. One of the disagreeable features was the sniper fire. After we crossed the Rapido we were short of troops and were unable for several days to clean the Germans out of the hills immediately above us. It was a regular thing to have a bullet crack by your ear, coming from God knew where. I hated this worse than the random shelling. It made me uneasy to think the Jerries were watching me all the time and drawing a careful bead.

The other West Pointer, Lieutenant Colonel Sweeting, was thirty-three years old, I believe, and had been overseas for a long time. He had had some previous combat with his tanks, but nothing, I am sure, to compare to the fighting that went on during this period. He was what his men called battle-happy. When the fighting was on he seemed to be lifted into a sort of exalted state which gave him limitless energy and more or less deprived him of personal fear. He radiated vigor and enthusiasm and had the faculty of communicating a feeling that the battle was an exciting game rather than a terrifying ordeal. This feeling never lasted, so far as I was concerned, after the shooting began, but in between times when we were working up plans he usually deceived me into thinking it was all good fun. He was a great conniver and plotter and would spend hours thinking up ways to bag some German self-propelled gun that was giving us trouble. Once he spent three days having an anti-tank gun lugged up a hill above Cassino where it could fire point-blank at German SPs when they came out of their hiding places to attack our tanks. We had a piece of hard luck, though. Just as two SPs showed themselves the telephone went out and we couldn't notify the anti-tank gunners where to look. By the time we had gotten to them in a roundabout way by radio, three of our tanks had been knocked out almost in front of our faces.

Colonel Sweeting was the type who could always put things picturesquely. After he'd been in an engagement there was never any difficulty getting a story out of him. It came hot and smoking off his tongue so you got the feel of it. So many soldiers become tongue-tied.

He was nervous, high-strung, and keen and yet had tremendous self-discipline. He had apparently been an excessive smoker. In this crisis he decided he would have to give it up, and succeeded in doing so even under the tremendous pressure of a battle, which gyrated wildly between victory and defeat.

When I first met him he was badly unshaven because he had de-

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cided not to shave until he got into Cassino. After about a week he saw the folly of waiting until we had Cassino and appeared one morning fresh as a flower.

He hadn't come of a military family. His father and grandfather and great-grandfather before him had been masons and builders. But his mother died when he was young and he was brought up by a military-minded uncle.

"He never put pressure on me," said the colonel, "but he sort of subtly guided me on military paths by giving me such things to read as Dick Prescott's first, second, third, and fourth years at West Point. Pretty soon it was my idea that I should be a soldier."

The colonel was a very interesting fellow.

The new command post where I stayed with Major Chapman after the Rapido had been crossed was a stone house built into the side of the hill. The Germans had used it for a machine-gun post. One of their steel turrets, with stools for two gunners, had been set into the rock just in front of the house. You could sit in this, looking through a periscope, and command a desolate acreage of stumps, barbed wire, and shell holes which ran to the Rapido half a mile distant. This turret had been appropriated as a little den by Corporal Gary Byker, of Hull, Iowa, who used to gaze through the periscope and then call out the back of the turret:

"Yup, I'm beginning to like those Germans."

The general idea of this remark was to bait someone into asking, "Why?" when he would reply:

"Because they didn't kill every one of us. Take a look through here."

Then he'd show anyone with curiosity to look the murderous field of fire. It was really horrible. The German only needed to sit there and squeeze the trigger and wave the barrel back and forth and he could sweep five or ten acres with bullets. I never did understand how our men got through the barbed wire and the mine fields even at night to take this position.

"Yup," Byker would say, "Jerry let us off easy here."

Byker, who had been wounded three or four times, had himself captured nine Germans at this house, I believe, although not by frontal assault. He was wandering down the road below the house after the river had been crossed when the Jerries came out and surrendered.

I don't know how old he was, probably twenty-two or -three, but I imagine that all in all he'd had more and tougher combat than

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any but a very few veterans of the entire American portion of the last war. Recently Major Chapman had taken him for his aide. He was a cheerful, tough little soldier, with a thorough practical understanding of the kind of war in which we were engaged. It always gave me confidence to have him around. Also he was very handy to have around. During lulls and periods of wait he kept busy making coffee, opening tins of cheese and heating cans of C ration.

Our food situation was reasonably bad. Because of transport difficulties across the Rapido we had nothing but C and K rations, which get pretty tiresome. There was hardly ever enough water. Through my connection with the tank battalion, however, I had an in with the tank liaison officer, Captain Edwin Arnold. He had his own tank sitting in the road just below us, and every few hours we would go down and holler to the men inside. One of them would pop out of the turret and hand us down food and water. The tanks, like ships, always carried pretty good stores.

Cassino was only about fifteen minutes' walk from the command post, following a road which wound along the narrow strip between the Rapido and the rocky hills. Our troops had cleaned the Germans off the slopes and our most advanced units had reached the edge of town. It was apparent we were going in at any time. Toward evening I went forward.

I Company, which was down in strength to thirty-eight men, was to be used for the attack. I found them huddled in a quarry about six hundred yards from town. I couldn't believe they were going to try it with so few men.

"We think the Germans may have pulled out," explained Captain Wayne Fraizer, of Jamestown, New York. "We've got to go in and find out."

The rest of the regiment was tied down holding the approaches to the town. The remains of I Company and some tanks were all that were available for the entrance.

The hope that the town had been abandoned was based on the fact that the Germans had smoked it up earlier in the day. This could mean either that they were pulling out under cover of the smoke or they were using the smoke to conceal some switches in defenses, particularly the movement of their self-propelled guns, which had been splitting open our tanks. The effectiveness of these deadly monsters lay largely in their being placed in unexpected positions to ambush our armor.

If I had been one of the thirty-eight going into Cassino I would

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have felt very uneasy, but some strange confidence had seized the men. Usually they are full of gloom and foreboding; pessimism has them and it becomes the job of the officers to instill confidence that plans are well made and the attack can't fail.

But in making this precarious attack they were jubilant. They all wanted to give me their names and addresses with good statements for publication. Word that I was a syndicated correspondent capable of getting them fame in their home towns had gotten around. They gave me such stuff as these pre-battle words of triumph from the lips of Sergeant Ivan de Graff, of Alton, Iowa:

"You can tell 'em," he said, "that this is the toughest little company in any army in the world. Thirty-eight of us are going to take Cassino tonight and have a dance with those girls the Jerries have been playing around with."

Similar exuberant remarks were made by other enlisted men. I was given much advice just how to phrase a triumphal account so that Fighting I Company would get full credit for a great job magnificently done.

This unusual demonstration alarmed the officers. As the men pushed off Lieutenant Bill Higgins, of Wyoming, Pennsylvania, called out: "Don't get careless because you're so happy, men." And Captain Fraizer shouted to Sergeant Ingwald Anderson, of Lake Mills, Iowa, "Don't let 'em get careless, Andy. Don't let 'em pick things up. The town will be booby-trapped."

Off they trooped in single file, accompanied by eight tanks. There was a period of silence while the sun went down. Then up in Cassino we heard a hideous banging. Fast projectiles came smoking down the road with a whoosh and blast that made us shrink against the rock face of the quarry. A few seconds later we heard a great clumping of feet and clanking of weapons and around the corner came Fighting I Company, bug-eyed and breathless. Close behind them clattered three of our eight tanks.

They'd run into an ambush. Jerry had lain in wait until four of our tanks had passed. Then he'd let go point-blank at the fifth, knocking it out and blocking the street so the first four were trapped in town. A second anti-tank gun had cut loose on the men, punching shells down the road as fast as its crew could load. Fighting I Company had abandoned plans for a dance that night in Cassino.

Fortunately the Germans had not ambushed them with machine guns. Still present and accounted for were all thirty-eight members of Fighting I.

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Later we learned the trapped tanks had roamed for hours through the town, shooting up what they could while Jerry infantrymen stalked them in the dark with hand grenades, bazookas, and dynamite. There is nothing more uneasy in an enemy town at night than a tank. Every time it stops in a dark alleyway the crew is haunted with fear that the enemy will creep around a corner with a bazooka, lean out a window with a sticky bomb, or creep out of a doorway and hang on a load of dynamite.

The tanks would form up in piazzas and try to keep their guns pointed in every direction, but soon they would be driven off by grenades. They would take off up another alley, shooting when they could spot anything to shoot at.

One by one they were pried open with grenades and the crews taken prisoner. Their story was told by one tanker who escaped. It was later verified by a German prisoner who positively denied one thing, however—that one of our men had been sniped at by a German as he came out of a tank with hands up.

The next evening at sundown we tried again. We were so pressed for man power and the difficulties of reinforcing across the Rapido quagmire were so great that the attack had to be made by the same thirty-eight members of I Company, reinforced this time with only five tanks.

I had a ringside seat in a light machine-gun nest on a steep cone almost overhanging the northern edge of the town, where we were attacking.

The attack began with a thunderous smashing artillery barrage designed to knock out the two anti-tank guns which had broken up our previous night's attack. Major Thomas, the artillery officer controlling the barrage, described it as one of the heaviest he had known on a pinpoint area. The concussion of the first salvo of 200-pound shells was so great that I and five soldiers in the machine-gun post with me ducked into the dugout as the wind and shock broke on us. We thought we were being fired at. Portions of shrapnel even whizzed into the surrounding rocks. After regaining his equilibrium, Pfc. Melvin Hollowell, of Coloran, North Carolina, exclaimed:

"Keep on throwing that high explosive at 'em, boys. I don't care if I'm paying taxes the rest of my life so they throw that stuff at 'em instead of throwing me at 'em."

White phosphorous shells to provide a cover of smoke accompanied the high explosive. Under cover of the barrage the tanks moved forward a few yards at a time, woofing shells point-blank at

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the first buildings in Cassino where it was feared the Germans had established sniping and machine-gun nests. Our troops, some of them riding atop the tanks, crouched behind the turrets. The others walked behind. They disappeared dramatically into the smoke.

It was the first time I had seen our troops go into battle on top of tanks. It was a tremendous sight, and the soldiers in my machine-gun post got a great thrill out of it, especially when they recognized a buddy and one of them shouted:

"Hey, there's Bud. Look, guys, there's Bud on top of a tank."

Lying on his stomach behind the turret and armed only with a .45-caliber pistol, which he pointed straight into the smoke, was Sergeant Adrian Van Steenberger, of Sheldon, Iowa.

The first contact with the enemy was marked by machine-gun bursts. Then we heard the heavy slam-banging of tanks and anti-tank guns walloping at each other. In the twilight we could see German shells of incandescent green streak out of the smoke about neck-high and disappear down the road.

There was a horrible ringing crash as one of our tanks was knocked out. Catching fire, it burned with a lurid glow in the smoke while the ammunition went off with volcanic flashes.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Major Chapman striding rapidly across a terrace just above me, stopping at each machine-gun nest and hollering something to the men. I jumped up and joined him and he said:

"It's getting hot. Jerry is counterattacking on the far side of the hill. I'm short of men over there."

He was ordering all extra gunners, radiomen, and others not actively engaged at the moment to climb to the top of the hill and support the hard-pressed platoon, which was having a brisk fire fight with machine guns and rifles.

Then I looked down at the town and saw a soldier hurry out of the smoke and run toward I Company's command post. I ran downhill to get the news and arrived just as Captain Fraizer shouted at the soldier: "Why did you come out?"

"All the tanks are knocked out. Everyone's coming out," said the soldier.

"Goddamnit," said Captain Fraizer, "I told 'em to get in those houses and stay in 'em. Who told 'em to come out?"

After a few minutes only three soldiers had come out, and all had been sent back by Captain Fraizer to the accompaniment of some burning remarks.

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Next arrival from the front lines was Major Dolvin, who had led the tanks into battle. His appearance on foot, supporting a wounded man, made it plain that his tank had been knocked out.

"Have you any tanks left?" demanded Lieutenant John Kiely, of Marshalltown, Iowa.

"There's a couple of them still left," said Dolvin.

In a few minutes Sergeant Steenberger came from the town with a plea from Lieutenant Higgins for reinforcements. The telephone had gone out again.

There were no regular reinforcements on hand, so Captain Fraizer sent a messenger up the hill to a machine-gun unit which was supposed to be in reserve against German counterattack.

"Tell 'em to pull out and help us down here," said Fraizer.

Steenberger was exultantly shouting meanwhile: "At last I got to shoot that .45. I fired it from the tank into a window at two Jerries."

I asked him why he didn't carry a rifle and he said:

"Hell, you can always pick up a rifle or a carbine on a battlefield, if you need one."

It took half an hour to assemble the reserves off the hill. Meanwhile a man came from town with a plea for a stretcher-bearer. I offered to carry, but Fraizer said:

"No, we've got medics. But if you want to take a look at the town you can go with these boys I'm sending in."

"I only want to get my foot in town so I can say I was there," I said. "Then I'll be off to Naples to file a story."

When the reserves had formed up Steenberger shouted:

"Now follow me at long intervals, and for God's sake keep quiet. Don't call your buddy to find out how he's doing."

I followed along. The red glare from a burning tank lighted the way. The Germans held a spur of the town which had direct observation on us as we moved over the hill and then down the road. We stooped out of instinct more than anything else. There was no concealing ourselves.

I asked Steenberger why Jerry didn't fire. He said probably he was afraid of exposing his positions and drawing the fire of our two remaining tanks.

At the edge of town we ducked into a shattered stone building where Lieutenant Higgins had set up a command post. Higgins sent the reinforcements forward. We ran up a small incline, passed through a narrow alley, and came into an open space; we crossed it, running like hell through loose rubble which seemed about to sprain

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your ankle at each bound. We were in full view in the weird red light of another burning tank which gave off a heavy heat. The shells went off from time to time with a deafening explosion in a burst of white light, and whizzing fragments of jagged hot metal spun across the black town.

We ducked into another house and scuttled downstairs to a doorway that gave on a little square, through which ran the main street leading into the center of Cassino. Here, pulled off the road and covering the approaches in two directions, squatted our two surviving tanks and one dead one. I crept behind one of them and shouted for the commander, drawing a burst of machine-gun fire in the general direction of my voice.

Sergeant P. D. Upchurch, of Galatia, Illinois, lifted himself out of the tank and dropped to the ground beside me. We sat behind the tank and he showed how he had arranged the two good tanks so they commanded the principal approaches down which the enemy might come with infantry or self-propelled guns.

After talking with Upchurch I returned to Higgins' command post and left town a little later with Van Steenberger, who steered me back to Fraizer's command post. Then I took off for the Naples telegraph office, which was about eighteen hours' hitchhiking distance away.

At Naples I discovered none of the other correspondents had been near Cassino. I had a good story and, being full of elation, ambition, and enthusiasm, and thinking I was becoming famous, I hitchhiked straight back to the front as soon as my stories had been filed, intent on going into Cassino a second time ahead of any other correspondent.

When I got back we still held the same few acres in town. The Germans had made no main effort to drive us out and we had contented ourselves with taking it easy while we gathered our thin strength for another punch.

I came into Cassino this second time by high moonlight, which washed the battered buildings with spooky beauty. In this black and silver fairyland the only activity was by combat patrols which prowled through the alleys and along the shadowy sides of piazzas, clutching tommy guns and ready to reach for grenades.

I sat in a dugout for two hours with Captain Washington C. Carter, of Montgomery, Alabama, and others while three patrols were dispatched. The first had been out nearly an hour when we heard the high-speed cracking of German automatic weapons fol-

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lowed by a fusillade of American shots. Captain Carter leaped off his bunk and shouted:

"See? See? I told 'em to shoot the sherbet. Let's get out and listen to that son of a bitch."

The serenade dwindled into desultory popping and occasional rifle fire while we stood in the clear cold bright night. Before long Second Lieutenant Paul Riordan, of Kansas City, leader of the patrol, arrived in a winded condition and reported:

"It took us fifty minutes to get out there and five minutes to get back. Snipers opened from a basement, then we had a machine gun on us. We fired back and tossed a few grenades in the window and shagged our tails."

The second patrol was led by Lieutenant Nicholas Sisco, of Passaic, New Jersey. Half an hour later we heard the pop of grenades, followed by bursts of rifle and tommy-gun fire. Captain Carter said:

"That's outgoing American fire."

"Unless the Jerries got hold of some of our guns," said Higgins. "We had street fighting in Oliveto when Germans wore American helmets. They even knew what outfits we were. Once they hollered, 'Hey, L Company,' to the L Company boys. Then they threw potato mashers [a type of hand grenade]."

Then there was a period of silence, broken by long bursts of American machine-gun fire, repeated over and over. A few minutes later Sisco burst in, breathless and indignant, and complained he had been shot at by the men of Lieutenant Luther Spurlock, of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Carter got Spurlock on the phone and shouted:

"Cut those damn sputter guns of yours. We've got patrols out."

Spurlock's voice could be heard indignantly denying the charge.

"We're just firing some more on that old hole," he said.

"Well, quit firing on that old hole," said Carter. "If you'll quit firing on it I'll send a tank up tomorrow to put its snout right down the hole."

I asked Carter what the old hole was and he said Spurlock's men had located the entrance to a German machine-gun bunker.

"They spend most of their time shooting at it," he said.

Sisco continued his report, saying: "I could hear Jerries walking in the big square. You've got to be careful. On a moonlight night in a town like this you can get yourself cut off easily as hell."

He pointed to a diagram of the town which showed a long building and said: "There must be Jerries in here. There was at least one

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walking on the second story. You could hear his feet on the loose tile. Then a machine gun seemed to be firing in our rear. We figured they were trying to cut us off, so we pulled out in another direction."

I asked Sisco for the names of some of the men in his patrol, as I planned to make them famous in every hamlet, village, town, and city in the country, but he didn't seem to know the men's names.

"Nobody knows anybody in this battalion," said Carter. (It had been so terribly shot up and filled with replacements.)

Sisco reported finding no enemy armor in his section. One of the principal objects of this patrolling was to locate SPs or tanks which the Germans might have moved under cover of darkness. Sentries were also instructed to listen for the beat of tank engines.

While we waited on a report from the third patrol, led by Second Lieutenant Stanley Davis, of Kingsley, Iowa, Carter read letters from his mother and sister which I had brought forward with me, and Sergeant Van Steenberger exhibited a valentine which he had received from his cousin, Miss Mary Overman, of Lemars, Iowa.

Steenberger appeared mildly pleased with the valentine, but the other occupants of the dugout expressed the opinion that valentines should be banned from the mails by Postmaster General Walker. They allowed *Esquire* would be much more welcome. We also had doughnuts sent forward from the Red Cross.

I expected to get a good story from the Davis patrol, as I had arranged with Private Tom Clayton, of Sylva, North Carolina, to carry a walkie-talkie and give me the play-by-play.

"Tell me everything that goes on as it happens, how you feel, what the town looks like, and I'll take it down word by word as it comes over the radio," I told Clayton. "It'll be a good story and will get in every hamlet, village, town, and city in America."

Clayton was all pepped up. But nothing came across. The radio pooped out. It got late, so I left town and went back to my blankets.

Only by a geographical chance in a thousand do you get such naked-eye views of military action as we had day after day at Cassino. Lieutenant Colonel Sweeting and Major Chapman had set up a joint command post low down on a hill in a villa from which we could throw a rock into the town. We had to shut off the rooms to the south because the Germans on Castle Hill directly across a gully had perfect visibility on us. So had we on them, but we weren't in this house for offensive purposes. This was board-of-directors stuff. We wanted no sniping or other activity out our

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windows which might draw the unfavorable attention of German artillery.

Above and behind us were American machine gunners in a dozen emplacements who spouted lead on German-held houses whenever they thought they detected movement. Or sometimes they would spray an area on general principles.

Even in broad daylight we could follow the glitter of the red tracers as they raced across the roofs and then struck the walls of houses, knocking up rapid spurts of stone dust. We could watch the spurts go up, down, or across a wall as the gunner adjusted his fire so the bullets would stream into a window.

A couple of days after the first entrance into the town we had built up to another combined tank and infantry attack designed to take the Cassino jail and a building we called the town hall. We met at the command post just before dawn. From directly below us rose the black smoke of a smoldering tank, and from time to time one of its 75 shells exploded with a jolt that knocked the plaster off the ceiling.

Before the jump-off there was the usual fussing with telephones and radio. It seemed a long time, shivering in the cold, hungry and tired. Periodically we heard the swish and whistle of incoming shells which landed deep in the town, making the whole landscape shudder. We were beating Cassino with our new 200-pound shells fired in salvos, which jarred the countryside like bombs. Whole areas would disappear in smoke and dust. However, when the dust had settled the buildings emerged fairly intact. It always seemed surprisingly little damage had been done to these fantastically rugged Italian buildings, which had been constructed not for the day, not for the week, not for the year, not for the century, but for the ages. Every peasant in southern Italy built his home to last until the stars grow cold.

It was just getting warmer when Colonel Sweeting called from his window: "Are you ready to get going with your infantry, Chapman?"

"Should be, sir," said Chapman, looking up from his telephone. Then he turned to me and said, "Jesus, I hope I never have another nut as tough as this to crack." Looking back at Cassino, it seems like a reasonable hope.

"Well, let's get them going," said the colonel. "I'll move the tanks forward a block. Get your infantry started and I'll throw my tanks in there."

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The plan was to have the infantry advance with the tanks following, ready to blast point-blank at any German machine gunners who had the audacity to open fire. Providing the Germans didn't have tank killers in position to knock off our tanks, we had the upper hand. Observers who had been scanning the town for two hours with glasses reported they were reasonably certain that our tanks were safe from ambush for the restricted advance the colonel and Chapman had planned.

However, no sooner had our tanks made a move than they were spotted by German observers who called on two self-propelled guns to advance and attack. They hadn't been in ambush, but were on call to counter any move we made. The colonel spotted the first and was on the radio immediately, warning his tank commanders. The squat, ugly, venomous thing trundled across a square in the middle of town with surprising speed while the artillery liaison man struggled with his communications, trying to get in touch with an anti-tank gun which we had planted some distance above us on the hill for the express purpose of firing on such enemy tank killers. But the miserable apparatus had broken.

A few seconds later a second SP was spotted coming down the main street to engage our tanks in a toe-to-toe slugging match. The colonel was hoarse with excitement. The SP came fast. Turretless, with low armored side walls, it offered a smaller target than our tanks. Moreover, it took advantage of a slight rise in the cobbled street so that only a few inches of its top were exposed.

Our tanks vainly tried to bring their guns to bear. Shells either ricocheted off the road in front of the SP or skimmed over it. Suddenly the SP let go with a series of terrific high-velocity shells, which in a matter of seconds knocked out three of our four tanks. This was the most terrifying sight of my war correspondence experience.

"Get the anti-tank gun on them," the colonel screamed at the artillery liaison man.

"I can't reach them," he answered.

"Have you taken that God damned thing apart and seen if the connections are O.K.?"

"Yes, yes. It still won't work."

I don't know how Colonel Sweeting felt except by his voice, which had gone up about three octaves from irritation, but I know I could barely restrain myself from grabbing a gun and bringing the

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butt down on the artillery liaison man's head. Of course it wasn't his fault, but that's the way I felt.

Meanwhile the German tank commander had jumped to the ground and with hand signals was maneuvering it behind a building where he could turn it around and withdraw back into the town.

We were hanging out the windows of the villa watching, forgetful of security. The commander of the other SP spotted us and blasted in three high-velocity shells, the first two of which lit just to the left of the building with a terrible impact, but I was so excited I didn't realize we were being fired at. I had some vague thought that we had a gun next to the house which was firing at the Germans.

Then the third shot hit the villa, which rocked. Dust sprang out of every crevice. I remembered seeing the red flash of the SP's gun and then feeling the villa stagger under the blow. I leaped for the stairway and made the first landing. Colonel Sweeting and Chapman were shouting into telephones and the enlisted men were darting about wildly. Apparently satisfied at driving us away from the windows, the SP shifted its fire to the machine-gun nests above us, gave them a brief going over and then squirmed around on its tracks and trundled off.

We fell back on the artillery again and tried to jar the Germans out of their defenses with great salvos, employing many guns, which timed their shells so they all arrived the same second. The colonel and Chapman worked up another plan for attack, and in the afternoon infantry and tanks pushed again and made a little headway, but not enough to make any difference.

I went back to Naples again with the story, which was a pretty good one. I also expected to find some congratulations from my new syndicate on the previous exclusive eyewitness stories as first correspondent in Cassino. However, there were no congratulations, so I wired a gentle reminder that I should be congratulated.

Their answer was to the effect, "Didn't you know that two weeks ago we discontinued your column until you got to England?"

That discouraged me. Talk about your one damn thing after another. Moreover, I had changed my mind about wanting to go to England, for the time being, at least.

I didn't have the face to go back to the 34th Division and explain to the boys that, after all, I hadn't made them famous in every hamlet, village, town, and city.

I wired the *Times* for permission to come home and meanwhile

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went up to visit the beachhead, which seemed to be on the verge of falling apart.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Anzio

EVERY TIME I get aboard a ship she doesn't go anywhere. I got in a ship at Oran, trying to go home, and she stayed at the dock for three days as though nailed. I finally abandoned that ship.

The trip to Anzio was worse in a way. It was three days, too, although it was supposed to be just overnight from Naples. We got off in good shape but then we could make no headway because the wind was blowing in several wrong directions. This was a peculiar ship, known as an LST, Landing Ship Tank—a flat-bottomed ark which carried a pair of bulldozers, a pair of tanks, a pair of jeeps, a pair of trucks, and a pair of anything mechanical, as a matter of fact, but no human pair. We had no nurses, Red Cross girls, or WACs to make life even partway bearable during this hideous journey.

Our ship, which it seems was built without a keel so she can sidle up to a beach and disgorge her cargo direct, was buffeted like a paper boat in a bathtub storm. After five hours it was the middle of the night and we didn't know whether we were blowing forward, backward, sideward, or perhaps downward. It got so bad we made for a headland and hid there.

But the storm kept blowing over the headland, making us drag anchor. We'd start the engines, weave and bomb, duck and twist, and hide under the headland again. This went on for three days, unfortunately, and we got very tired of it, especially because the ship was provided with only one good meal for us, which we ate the first night out. After that we had three meals a day of dried lima beans and hash, an unbalanced, unpleasant diet, especially since we ran out of coffee, too, and had nothing but tea made from heavily chlorinated water.

I was very happy when we arrived off Anzio on the third evening, until it became painfully apparent we had arrived just in time for an air raid. I didn't know it at the time, but this was a chronic

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condition at Anzio. There was an air raid going almost all night every night.

To hide the harbor from view, ships all around had lit smokes. This hid us from the enemy, but it also hid the dock from us. We couldn't see to move and sat there for a long time. Then there was a letup in the raiding and the smoke was allowed to thin. But just as we began to get glimpses of things the enemy came again and we smoked up the harbor again. We were six hours like this, between smoke and shore, with ack-ack blasting and flashing all around, enemy planes droning overhead, and our artificial fog illuminated by flares.

Every so often we would hear a German plane come whining down and in a second or two there would be the heavy "a-wumph" of a bomb. But none hit near us, which was all we were worrying about. There's nothing more selfish than a man being bombed. He hasn't a thought for anybody a mile away.

After six hours the captain seemed to think his eyes had become adjusted to the fog, because he tried to make a landing.

He had overestimated his optical powers. We came into the dock askew and had to back off and try again. While we were backing we collided with another ship, and meanwhile were being shelled, as we had gotten into a bad area. This made some of the passengers quite nervous, but I was only trembling and chattering my teeth. This business of being in an eggshell of a ship, with shells falling around, I found about as trying as anything I'd ever undergone.

I worried about what to do when I got ashore, as I had no transportation. So I sidled up to a first lieutenant named Vincent Tabor, who happens to come from Los Angeles, and I said, "I'm from Los Angeles too. I haven't got a ride. I'm from Los Angeles too."

He gave me his name and address and asked if he could take me anywhere. I told him I wouldn't bother him for the world but if he happened to be going by the Public Relations office he might drop me there.

The ship finally docked in the right place and we shot off the ramp in Tabor's truck at such a rate I expected he and his fellow first lieutenant, Ernest Siegel, of Malone, New York, might be nervous, too, but I decided it was impulsiveness.

We couldn't find Public Relations. I knocked on a dozen midnight doors. Everybody'd left town except the military, and nothing came back from my knocking except mournful echoes and a bruised fist. I hailed a jeep to ask advice and after some conversation

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it developed that the proprietor of the jeep was Lieutenant Colonel Boris Pash, who used to be baseball coach at Hollywood High School.

"I'm from Hollywood, too," I said. "Have you any idea where the Public Relations is? I'm from Hollywood, too."

"I've got another ride, fellows," I shouted to Tabor and Siegel, and transferred my baggage.

Colonel Pash and I knocked at a dozen one-o'clock-in-the-morning doors, but there wasn't a whisper of an answer, and his driver, named Beetson or something like that, said he knew a cot I could sleep on in a deserted Italian barracks, so I slept there despite a man named Jansen, who snores like a PT boat wide open doing quick evasive turns.

In the morning I arrived at the Public Relations villa, which stood on the beach at Nettuno. According to the United Press correspondent, Reynolds Packard, it had once been a home for mad children. He backed this contention by pointing to strange drawings on the walls, but they looked to me like drawings any children make, mad or sane. The villa had been christened Villa Virtue. The name was chosen in a fit of sarcasm after the Public Relations had piously declined to have the villa become an overnight refuge for nurses. The nurses were living in fields, constantly threatened with shellfire.

"We want to give them asylum for the night from the shells," the correspondents said. "Is there anything wrong in that?"

"Yes," said the Public Relations.

It was an excellent Public Relations, however. Although I was still only accredited to the Air Forces and had no call on army transportation, Major Henry Ehrlich, a splendid fellow, one of the best Public Relations officers I have known, told me I could ride all I wanted in his jeeps. He also said I could use the army radio if the other correspondents would agree to it unanimously. We had a vote, and all the correspondents, English and American, agreed. I guess they didn't fear my competition very much. I was no longer going around telling how my stories appeared in every hamlet, village, town, and city. I seldom discussed syndication any more.

The villa and the whole beachhead, for that matter, had a personality. It was an intimate place where you might have an 88 shell drop into your coffee cup at any moment, spilling the coffee, to say the least. But we lived interestingly, using the windows for garbage disposal, never undressing night or day under any circumstances,

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except possibly to take off our shoes when going to bed; drinking plenty of wine; writing plenty of stories until midnight; washing no more than once a day, and hardly ever brushing our teeth. The days passed very happily despite the shells and the nightlong bombing raids.

You never get quite used to the bombings but you can do pretty well. I had a rugged interview with the Prince Stefano Borghese one night which illustrates. We had three air raids during the course of the interview, both of us wincing and twitching throughout, but both too proud to go to the basement of his palace.

"We can go down if *you* like," said the Prince from time to time.

"Not unless *you* like," I said.

"I'm all right," he said.

"I'm easy," I said.

The first raid came in the middle of his story about Mussolini and the parrot.

"When I was in Rome last month," he said, "they told me Mussolini is so disgusted he won't talk to anyone except his parrot. He and the parrot have long conversations every day and neither ever says anything that offends the other."

As he said this a plane came whining down and the palace shook from the bomb and the blast of the ack-ack.

The Prince twitched and I wet my lips.

"If *you* like," he said, "we can go down to the shelter."

"Not unless *you* like, Prince."

"I'm comfortable," he said.

"No use leaving the fire," I said.

He had a nice little fire in his third-floor living room. The rest of his palace had been taken over by the Army. While we were talking, in fact, the Army made an appearance. A sergeant strode across the room and closed a window which apparently was defeating the blackout. The sergeant said he'd nail the window down if it happened again.

The Prince, who is thirty-two, a member of one of Italy's oldest, most distinguished, and richest families, disclosed to me one of the great discoveries he had made in the last few months.

"People are not so honest," he said. "I must say it has been quite a surprise. I thought people a bit better than I found them."

He had not discovered the lack of honesty until his thirty-second year because he had lived a sheltered, gentlemanly life as a boy, then had gone into the Navy and again had lived a sheltered, gentlemanly

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life until five months previously when the Germans began preparing Nettuno and Anzio for invasion. Among other things, they removed practically all the civilians from town and put them on the Prince's near-by estate. As the Prince seemed to be an intelligent, sincere young man, the Germans appointed him mayor of the whole shebang—Anzio, Nettuno, and the transplanted civilians on his estate. When we came in we told him to continue as mayor. It was in the course of his duties as mayor that he had made the interesting discovery about people's honesty.

He said he would send a policeman down to jack up a baker who was bootlegging rationed bread and nothing would happen except that the policeman got a triple ration. And so forth and so forth. He had many examples.

We had another slight air raid and the Prince said we could go to the basement if we wanted, but I said not unless he wanted and he said he was easy and I said it didn't bother me.

"What do you think the chances are that Italy will be able to form a sound government?" I asked.

On the basis of his new findings about honesty, especially in Italy, he took a pessimistic view.

"It is terrible," he said.

While we winced and flinched through a third air raid, and I dropped my pencil twice, he said he didn't know of a single young Italian capable of taking over the government.

The anti-Fascists, he said, are too violent against the Fascists, devoting their energies to settling old grievances rather than establishing a stable government. The Fascists, he said, are too corrupt to be trusted, and the only experienced non-corrupt non-Fascists, with moderation enough to forget their grievances, are too old to rule.

He seemed quite hopeless about Italy's immediate future. As an example of the feuds which he predicts will come in with self-government, he cited the tattle-tellings.

"When you invaded," he said, "the picture changed. Many of our military people feared the Germans would draft them. They hid in convents and other places in Rome. Their enemies promptly informed the Germans where they were hiding. Italians were informing on Italians at the rate of a thousand denunciations a day in Rome alone."

I asked the Prince if he were a Fascist and he said yes, he was, but not an enthusiastic one. In fact, he had not joined the Fascist

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party until 1939. For a man of his position that practically amounted to not being a Fascist.

He's a very pleasant, quick-spoken young man who talks excellent English learned from a governess. He was dressed in a sort of hunting costume and looked quite princely in a modern way.

The beachhead was the nearest approach I have seen to the romantic conception of what a battle should look like. It was worth while for a spectator to be there. There were always things to see.

We could sit in the windows at the press villa on the Mediterranean side nearly any time of day and be sure of a show good enough to pass an idle half hour watching the ships play hide-and-seek with German shells.

The shells never seemed to hit anything. It all seemed harmless and enjoyable. I had a room with Major Jay Vessels, the Air Public Relations officer, who used to spend most of his spare time hunched in the window, hoarsely calling the shots.

"Here comes another," he'd bellow as a shell sailed over whispering to itself.

Then we'd see a waterspout climb straight up, hang a few hundred feet high, and subside gracefully just about the time the crack of the explosions would make the doors rattle.

The major would go out of his head when we had an air battle, bellowing and roaring like an old grad at the football game. One morning his screams and shouts had us all at the windows, peering at a German reconnaissance plane which had been blown apart by the ack-ack. The main section of the plane was twisting across the sky, trailing a corkscrew of thick black smoke, while one wing lazily flip-flopped directly above us.

"Look, look, there he goes," roared the major as a parachute suddenly blossomed from the wreckage.

The flier drifted into the sea and the major was beside himself with jubilation at this definite eyewitness proof of a German air defeat.

It took the starch out of him when the pilot was brought in, half drowned and cursing, one of our own. We'd shot down a high-flying P-38.

The major became very morose at this. He was a frantic Air Corps booster, and the fact that neither our night fighters nor our day fighters had been able to bring down any Germans that we could personally see was a source of acute embarrassment to him. At least, he thought the ack-ack had succeeded in this instance.

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The Germans apparently had no direct observation on the harbor. The shelling was more or less at random. Sometimes, however, it came unpleasantly close to a ship, which would begin to move uneasily, seeking out a new position.

While it all looked harmless enough to us on shore, it was surely extremely unpleasant to the men sitting in the holds, waiting to land, with bunches of dynamite and TNT in their ammunition vehicles. As Second Lieutenant Sumner Wilson, of New Rochelle, New York, said:

"That's something no soldier has ever gone through in any other war."

We were shelled close to our villa from time to time when the Germans tried to interdict traffic on the main drag through Nettuno and Anzio, which ran past our front door. Shrapnel Alley, we called it. The traffic was a sight to see. It was like watching automobiles in a fast-motion picture. There was no loitering on this route. Even the largest trucks came blasting through at high speed, with an anxious driver wrestling the wheel.

Twice during my visit to the beachhead the Air Force put on terrific bombings. The fish in the harbor were probably stunned by the concussions. Mediums, heavies, and light bombers joined in these great demonstrations, which were aimed at attacking German forces a very few miles from the front lines. It was perfect for visibility. Sometimes there were two great flights moving across the German lines at the same time, followed by two patterns of German ack-ack. If we could put up the bombers, Jerry could certainly put up the flak. He laid it in amongst our ships so exactly that at a distance it was hard to tell which were the planes and which were the bursts.

Three times during one half hour when the bombers came in so thick there was no counting them I saw the bright orange flash of exploding planes, which twirled slowly to earth, drawing thin smokes after them and spilling out parachutists. Over the German landscape a thousand smokes from bombs were rising. Only once in a while does a battlefield look like an old-fashioned painting of a battlefield, but when our Air Force was putting on the greatest air show of this beachhead it looked like one of Napoleon's best as imagined by one of France's greatest painters. But there was no imagination here. It was the real thing.

The third day after I arrived at the beachhead the Germans came down on us with everything—tanks, planes, artillery, mortar, infantry—all at once.

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Through a powerful one-eyed telescope I saw for the first time one of the dramatic sights of war—enemy infantry moving in with the rapid stride of attack.

Squarely in view, wearing long field-gray overcoats, they walked in skirmish line across fields, through belts of trees, down ravines, and over crests, carrying rifles and automatic weapons at ready.

German tiger tanks trundled along with them, occasionally kicking up a skirt of dust as they fired their great guns point-blank at our positions. Our shells were dropping in the vicinity, tossing up spouts of red earth, but it seemed to me the enemy was strangely oblivious to the danger of flying shrapnel.

"They don't even duck," I told the owner of the telescope, Sergeant Max Geller, of Boston, Massachusetts.

"The shells probably aren't landing as near as you think," he explained. "That's a 20-power glass you're looking through and you don't understand the perspective."

While the German tanks and infantry advanced along one approach, our tanks put on a counterattack, visible in the foreground of Geller's glass. It seemed impossible that the rival tanks were unable to see one another, but apparently even though observers from both sides undoubtedly radioed the presence of the enemy, the tanks were not in position to shoot.

They passed one another going in opposite directions and soon each side had the other flanked.

This view through Geller's glass was one of the rarest scenes of the war.

Usually enemy infantry is invisible, behind either a hill, trees, or houses, or is too distant for view through glasses. Very few people I know actually have seen enemy troops attacking.

There was a big stone mill with walls about seven feet thick right close to the front lines, which was used by observers from all sorts of units. From its windows one afternoon I saw a whole landscape, literally hundreds of acres, crawling with tanks, tank destroyers, and self-propelled guns. (As far as I'm concerned, all these models can be lumped together as tanks. They all run on tracks, carry heavy guns, and are heavily armored. The difference between them is about as great as the difference between a coupé and a roadster.)

They were hiding behind every bush big enough to give any sort of camouflage, lurking behind farmhouses, or moving boldly up the roads under heavy artillery. The countryside was barking with their

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gunfire and the sky was striped with tall high pillars of black smoke rising from the wreckage of knocked-out tanks. They were surprisingly hard to see as long as they remained motionless. But when they moved you could pick them up. And when they fired, a bright jet of orange flame would spout from their proboscislike gun.

Our bombers worked overtime during this particular attack, plunging out of the sky with a chilling whine and pitching their bombs in full view. We had planes coming in and out at almost every minute of the day.

Even so, the Luftwaffe seemed able to break through without meeting much resistance. An air umbrella is one of the most difficult things to maintain effectively. It's more a figure of speech than an actuality. The enemy can come in from so many different quarters at so many different altitudes that it's almost impossible to keep the entire sky plugged up.

With so many planes of our own shuttling in and out, it was difficult, too, when the enemy flew high, to know whether he was ours or theirs.

I remember seven Focke-Wulfs coming in one brilliantly clear morning, flying too high to be seen but easy to spot because of the vapor trails they drew across the icy upper sky. They crossed the perimeter, drove back of our lines as far as the beach, and then curved upward in an almost vertical climb marked by seven slowly ascending ribbons of white vapor. It was a beautiful sight, especially as we thought they were ours, since the ack-ack was quiet.

When they reached a level that satisfied their leader, they doubled back toward our front lines and lunged down in long humming dives, dragging their vapor trails after them until they hit the lower warmer air and became tiny plunging dots. Some seconds later the air thudded with the concussion of their bombs.

I was at the massive stone mill one afternoon when the Germans put on an attack with infantry and armor which I thought threatened the whole safety of the beachhead, a belief which was shared by front-line officers. It was principally a battle of tanks. The roads were dotted with them, moving into the fight or trundling back for ammunition. Because the jellylike reclaimed marshlands wouldn't support heavy armor, the movement took place on roads, which of course had been taped for artillery fire. There could be no attempt at camouflage or secrecy. It was a common sight to see two, three, or four men walking back from a knocked-out tank.

At one time the German tanks were firing point-blank at the mill,

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driving observers down into the cellar. Then there was a lull and I tried to get up nerve enough to go upstairs to see what must have been a terrific sight. I had just started out of the cellar when a terrific concussion blew us all into a heap against a wall.

"What was that—a bomb?" I asked Lieutenant Colonel James Churchill, of San Antonio, Texas.

"I don't know," he said through the dust. "Maybe it was a shell."

I waited a few minutes and started up again. I got to the stairs and found a soldier sprawled with his leg virtually blown off. He looked curiously normal except for the horrible mess at his knee. He was saying to the medic who was trying to give him morphine, "I don't need that. It doesn't hurt."

That's the mercy of shock. I suppose it's nature's anesthesia.

Somehow I couldn't step over him and go upstairs. Instead I went back into the cellar where a terrified Italian was being ejected, while Captain Joe Car of Orange, Texas, commanding tank destroyers, was volunteering to send his outfit in to stop the German tanks.

"We'll lay up for 'em," he said. "If we get the first shot we win. But if you haven't got good gunners you're sunk."

I left the observation post and started toward the command post of Colonel Bernard, an old friend from Sicily, commanding the 2nd Battalion of the 30th Infantry, which, in my experience, was the best small American fighting unit in the Mediterranean.

I wanted to see what the colonel had up his sleeve. The situation seemed to be getting crucial. En route I was hailed by Private James A. Barnes, of Louisville, Kentucky, who was squatting in a machine-gun nest, anxious to know how far away the Germans were.

"I don't know," I said. Then I asked him what kind of orders he had.

"We've got orders to hold," he said. That meant, more or less, stand and die, I guess.

I was glad I was not attached to Private Barnes's machine-gun section. We could hear small-arms fire just ahead and the blasting of our tanks giving the Jerries point-blank fire.

Further on I talked to a tank crew which had pulled out after six hours in battle.

"It sure wears you out," they said.

"It was the snipers who wouldn't let us get our heads up that worried me most," said Corporal Everett Raibourn, of Bremerton, Washington.

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Pfc. Ray Willoughby, of Van Nuys, California, entertained the opinion that the dive bombing wasn't any too easy to take, and Corporal Edward Carmichael, of Monterey, California, offered as his bit:

"You can just tell the folks back home that the shrapnel is coming in pretty thick."

I found Colonel Barnard getting himself together for one of his locker-room talks to his officers. These are terrific speeches. You never know what the colonel is going to say except that it will be picturesque. First we had a huge luncheon of wonderful beef which came from a young water buffalo or something which had had the misfortune to become a shellfire casualty. The luncheon, in a baronial room in a great castle a few miles from the front, was served with style. An Italian woman and some flunkies brought it in. There was wine and afterwards the colonel conferred with officers of his own staff. Then he called in the company and platoon leaders and shouted at them:

"We're going to counterattack at dawn. If we aren't successful we'll dig our next slit trenches in the sea."

That shook me up a bit and I think it shook up the young officers.

"Tell your men," continued the colonel, "that when they see a God damned German they're not to stop shooting until the son of a bitch is dead."

He took them to the window, pointed out the terrain, and then indicated the plan of attack on a map. He did it all quickly, and dismissed the officers. It was dramatic and punchy.

I never saw him again but ran across his second in command, Major Lynn Fargo, a couple of weeks later in Casablanca when I was headed for California. The major was being rotated home too.

"The colonel got wounded," he said. "But I don't think badly."

In any case the battalion hit the Germans hard at dawn and had a great part in busting up the German threat. It was a good outfit, part of the 3rd Division.

It was during this period that there was a big to-do in the world about the beachhead situation. President Roosevelt was describing the situation as "tense"; Prime Minister Churchill was contradicting him; and the Prime Minister of Canada was painting a black picture so his people wouldn't become complacent.

For some reason General Sir Harold Alexander, commander in

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chief, Mediterranean, took it into his head that the beachhead reporters were responsible for the alarmist reports that were being circulated.

He summoned us to conference.

It was short and sweet. We stood in a semicircle and he stood before us, lean, cockily military, his head at an arrogant angle and a racy cap pulled low on his head.

Without preliminary he handed us a verbal pasting for blowing hot and cold on the beachhead situation, for giving military information to the enemy in our dispatches, and for unnecessarily alarming the public in England and America. We were told our radio for getting out news would not be restored until we wrote according to a policy which would blow neither hot nor cold, but down the middle.

He was rough and wrong. As soon as he had finished an English correspondent spoke up firmly and said:

"I am very indignant at these charges. I ask you to give specific examples of alarmist copy that has come from the beachhead or copy that has given information to the enemy."

In the ensuing couple of minutes it became apparent that the general did not know whether the stories to which he referred were written at the beachhead, at Naples, in Algiers, or in London or Washington.

"They weren't written here," he was firmly assured.

"Well, if you didn't write them, what are you doing here?" he said irritably.

He was doing fairly poorly, and a brigadier who had accompanied him, the kind of Englishman who made me suddenly remember how I used to dislike the English, stepped up and said:

"I will take over now."

When we protested about the radio being taken away he brushed aside our arguments and said:

"You don't get the radio back until you follow the line."

We asked him the names of any one man who had written a discreditable story from the beachhead. He gave two names. Neither were those of beachhead reporters.

"What other name do you remember?" he was asked.

"I remember the name of Norman Clark," he said.

Norman Clark stepped forward and demanded: "What did I write?"

"To tell you the truth," said the brigadier, "I only remember your

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name. I can't remember whether what you wrote was good or bad."

Afterwards we met with the major general in charge of operations on the beachhead. We wondered if he couldn't have set General Alexander straight before the conference.

"He never consulted me," he said. "I have since told him that I am certain no such stories came from the beachhead."

We still had lost our radio, but two days later it was restored with no strings attached about blowing hot and cold.

It was preposterous to ask that stories neither blow hot nor cold. Battles blow hot and cold. So must stories.

Some days later I left the beachhead, starting home.

CHAPTER XXIX

Going Home

GETTING STARTED HOME was like a fly trying to take off from molasses.

I made my first try in a big way, walking up to Lieutenant General Jacob Devers, who was on visit, and saying: "Sir, may I hitchhike back to Naples with you?"

"You may," said the general.

"Thank you, sir." (Salute.)

Two hours later the Germans launched another big attack and a certain curiosity made me stay. I was curious to see if General Sir Harold Alexander was right when he made a positive statement the Germans could not knock us off the beachhead. I didn't disbelieve him but neither was I so sure.

General Alexander was right, although it took three days for the Germans to learn it.

When they had let up I started home again, driving to the airport to get a plane ride. The plane service had deteriorated a bit by this time. The Germans had shelled the airport so much we had withdrawn our fighters and reduced the service to an occasional small transport which carried four at a time.

The transport came in all right but there were eighteen men ahead of me, so I gave up flying and hustled to the docks to get a PT boat which somebody rumored was pushing off for Naples at 11 A.M.

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What they meant was that it was arriving from Naples at 11 A.M. and was pushing off at 2 P.M., or fourteen hours, as we say in the service, if we manage to remember.

At fourteen hours I was back down at the docks again and boarded the PT, which came in right on the dot from an anchorage farther out where it had avoided the harbor shelling. In five minutes, not a second more, probably several seconds less, it was loaded with passengers, bags, mailbags, etc., and was jouncing across the swells for open sea.

It took four freezing hours to make the trip, marked by only one incident, when the crew started blasting with all guns, causing the passengers to throw themselves behind their bedrolls in panic. The crew laughed. It's one of their jokes not to tell the passengers when they're going to have gun drill.

When we arrived in Naples it took about twenty-five minutes to unload our stuff, because there was no danger of shelling and everybody fooled around, gossiping and wasting time.

The next morning I went to the airport to catch a plane for Algiers. Also present were three other Americans homeward bound, B-25 fliers. They had completed their tours two months earlier and had been waiting around to get a promotion from the rank of flight officer to a regular commission. After two months they still hadn't been promoted, so they were giving it up and going home anyway. There's too much truth in the words of that old song, "There'll Be No Promotion This Side of the Ocean."

Another passenger was Pierce Creeth, editor of the *Press*, Christchurch, New Zealand, bound for United Kingdom. Seeing him off at the airport was William Whitlock, editor of the *Herald Tribune*, Hastings, New Zealand, who had also been scheduled to fly out. But he had put it off a day, having just gotten in touch with his son Tony, a captain in the New Zealand infantry, then attacking Cassino. Tony, who had been granted permission to see his father, had been overseas three and a half years, and still no prospect of rotation. Try that sometime.

Our plane took off promptly on schedule, but it took off without us. A few minutes before departure half a dozen high-priority passengers drove grandly up and took our seats. We were all very soured because we didn't like their looks in the first place and two of them were women, in the second place.

A couple of hours later we picked up an Algiers plane coming in from Foggia, swung south to the sea, and bade good-by to old

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Vesuvius, which was smoking belligerently and wore a flat vapor cloud like a Chinese coolie's hat. Vesuvius' variety is endless. He's up to some smoke, fire, and atmospheric trick every hour. I'm not much of a fan of this sort of thing myself, but there are people who become aficionados of Vesuvius—the last people you'd imagine, too. Major Jay Vessels, at whose apartment the Air Force reporters lived, spent time each evening on the balcony watching Vesuvius belch, flare, smoke, and glow. He wasn't satisfied to see it himself. He was always persecuting other people to come out and look too.

I thought of the major as we passed Vesuvius, and then I thought of him again a little later when two British soldiers in the plane began cutting bread and bully beef to make sandwiches. The major and I had given a lift to a British soldier one day, a cheerful soul, and after we had dropped him the major said:

"I've never met a British soldier yet who was a disappointment."

I thought of this while I waited anxiously to see if those two soldiers would offer me a sandwich or if they would be a disappointment. They gave me a sandwich. Their names are Corporal Walter Shuter, of Falmouth, Cornwall, and Sergeant Arthur Wright, of London. For a sandwich I'll put your name in a book sometime, if I'm hungry enough.

My program was interrupted ten days in Algiers by a new idea I had for going to London. I thought I would go to London, try to calculate when the invasion would be, then either stay for it or go home, if there were time. London seemed to suspect that this was my plan, because they wanted to know why I wanted to come to London.

"Foreign correspondence, of course," I said.

"How long do you want to stay?" London asked suspiciously.

"Depends on circumstances," I told the local representative.

Each of these bits of repartee consumed three days. On the ninth day I ran across an old friend, Colonel Nick Necrason, former commander of a heavy-bomber outfit in India, who was homeward bound with his own Liberator.

"Why don't you ride home with us?" he asked. "We'll be there in four days. We're leaving tomorrow."

"I will," I said.

I informed the Public Relations of this plan and discovered I would have to go through another routine of getting permission from Washington to go home, which would probably demand a few days of repartee. At the same moment permission to go to Lon-

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don came through and the London middleman, when informed I wasn't going to London after all the repartee, became incensed and difficult. I would probably have ended going nowhere at all had not the new Public Relations chief in Algiers, Brigadier General Tristam Tupper, proven himself a gentleman of the first water. He made seven quick telephone calls and got me straightened out to go home with special permission and no Washington repartee. The next day we were out at the airport to get in Colonel Necrason's private Liberator.

This was the sorriest old ship in which I ever rode. I like to say nice things about airplanes which give me a lift, but this old witch was so decrepit she belonged nowhere but the glue factory. She'd been given to the colonel to ride home in by General Stratemeyer, and there was a method in the general's generosity. He gave Colonel Necrason the oldest Liberator in the theater, a poor old tired-out cranky thing which had worn out four sets of engines, had had two crackups, and was in such generally sad shape that she'd been stalled twelve days in Algiers while her numerous ailments were treated with wrenches, pliers, blowtorches, and ball-peen hammers.

She was so old nobody knew what she'd done, where she'd been, or who'd had her. She'd lost her papers twice and was like an old divorcée who mixes up her ex-husband's name and picks up with barroom acquaintances. But she was going home. I was ready to tweak her cheeks and tell her she was pretty.

As soon as we took off, however, I changed my mind. The old witch immediately suffered a horrible multiple breakdown at an altitude of 100 feet.

The wheels wouldn't retract. The flaps wouldn't come up. The whole instrument panel went out, the third engine spluttered and went rough, and the odor of gasoline was so strong that we were half asphyxiated.

Usually I never know what's going on in a plane, but I knew things weren't going well that day. The old witch shuddered and shook and had vibrations like the ague. Colonel Necrason, the pilot, and Lieutenant Colonel Dalene Bailey, the copilot, were pulling on wheels and rudders and kicking pedals. Sergeant R. W. Baird was jerking levers. Captain James R. Barton was looking amazed and alarmed and offering advice, and Lieutenant Herman Glick and Sergeants W. R. Ober and R. A. Whistle were grabbing holt of things and clutching at their throats.

Even Roger, the dachshund, who has 250 combat hours and

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thinks that everything that goes on in a Liberator is normal, had his tail between his legs. I don't know what the other two passengers were doing. They were in the back of the ship, a couple of B-17 fliers from Italy on their way home after fifty missions. They were probably saying to themselves, "Well, I always knew a Liberator would be like this."

We swung back toward the airfield with everybody pumping and pulling and clutching and grabbing and the old witch wobbling and shaking worse than ever. As we were sloping for a landing the wheels swung up so hard they slammed, the instrument panel came to life, the flaps went up, and there was nothing wrong except that the third engine was running rough and the gasoline odor persisted. We went on to Casablanca.

The landing was worse than the take-off. A squall came down the way squalls do in a tropical movie. We got down where we could see the ground and then went hunting for the airport, hurdling towers, trees, and telegraph poles.

We found the airport, circled for a landing, lost our bearings in the rain, and came in at the wrong angle. We were about to land in a hangar when Colonel Necrason shot the blossom to the old witch. She shook as though she had the palsy, cleared a water tower, and got ready to make another pass with her left engine going rougher than ever.

Coming down this time, we mistook the highway for the runway and Colonel Necrason kicked the old witch in the rump, we cleared a high-tension wire, and Roger, the dachshund, put his paws over his eyes and whimpered like a billy goat. I don't know what the two B-17 pilots in the back of the ship were doing. I guess they were saying, "It's always like this in a Liberator."

We came down a third time and the rain lifted for just a moment in time for Colonel Necrason to come in like Casey sliding for home.

After we landed the two B-17 pilots said, "Good-by! Good luck!"

After that we had a most enjoyable time watching a C-54 with a major general aboard trying to make a landing in the rain. The first time they almost let down in a barracks, and the second time they mistook a small cliff for a patch of clear ground. After that they disappeared for half an hour, but we could hear them circling. We smiled wisely at one another. Finally she hove into view again, balancing uneasily on her wings while the pilot struggled to tell the runway from a taxiing strip. He brought her in and the last we saw the major general and the crew were enjoyably watching a DC-3

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make a pass at an irrigation ditch which its pilot mistook for the runway.

The next day at Casablanca, when we came on the field for the take-off, we found some eager French flying cadets gathered round our old hag of a plane, admiring it.

"Ahhh, they are wonderful, these Liberators," exclaimed one enthusiastically.

Two minutes later Sergeant Whistle climbed out of the bomb bay and announced we would be held up a couple of hours, possibly a day, because the gasoline tanks were leaking so badly that flight would be impossible.

The old ship was such a chronic leaker that at one time she was christened the *Sieve*, a name which still was faintly visible. She'd had several names. Another, which she still bore, was the *Sniffer*, which went with a drawing of a dog sniffing at a fireplug. I thought this had something further to do with her leaking tendencies, but Colonel Nick Necrason said no.

Her current name was *Westward Ho-Jaldijao*. Westward Ho referred to her mission to carry us home. *Jaldijao* is the Indian word for *tout de suite*, pronto. A great name for this old leaker.

The French cadets who thought she was so wonderful were going to America to learn flying and were starry-eyed about all American things—planes, tanks, flying technique, skyscrapers, and also American girls.

"Perhaps we will marry American girls while we are there," said one of them unexpectedly.

This prompted Colonel Necrason to ask if the Germans were marrying French girls.

"Never, never, never, never, never, never," they said.

"Never?" asked Colonel Necrason.

"No French girl would ever marry a German, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever," said the French boys.

"My grandmother," said the colonel, "was a French girl and she married my grandfather and he was a German boy."

We took off after a luncheon of K rations and bored through alternate clear skies and stormy weather, bending along with the African coast until we came to a pleasant desert country sparsely dotted with a queer pulpy-looking tree as thick through at the base as a sequoia, but growing no higher than a willow. In the midst of this landscape we came down at an airport called Rufisque, which lies next to Dakar.

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We didn't go into Dakar because the Army said Dakar is off limits. Besides, we were tired because the leaky gasoline system was something of a strain and, moreover, we were up late the night before playing blackjack. We didn't get sleep on the plane because all the way down, when we weren't bouncing around in a squall, we were playing more blackjack on a tiny wooden table, which was specially carpentered to fit between the pilot's and the copilot's seats.

So we just took it easy, playing more blackjack in our barracks.

We quit early because we had to get up early in the morning to fly an ocean in old *Westward Ho-Jaldijao*. And I must say that, much as I detested the old girl, she seemed to be in fine fettle after we had taken care of her kidney trouble in Casa. We seemed to have found the cure for her.

The next evening, after endless hours flying the Atlantic, we came down with the setting sun at Natal, Brazil, the little town from which, nearly two years before, I had taken off in the clipper for the Middle East, India, China, and Burma, returning via North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. A long journey, my friends. A round trip to wars on three continents.

And so we were all back in the Western Hemisphere: Colonel Necrason after nearly twenty-seven months overseas, Colonel Bailey after twenty-five months, myself after twenty-one months, and the others after fifteen months.

That's a lot of months, and it should have felt better to get back in our own private hemisphere than it did. We tried to be excited and wanted to spring around with joy, but there wasn't much spring in our legs.

And coming back to Natal wasn't coming back to something we knew. It was a letdown. The sleepy, dirty little jumping-off place of those long months ago had become a great vibrant, efficient, antiseptic base where the water's chlorinated, soft drinks are served in the PX, Red Cross girls and nurses are seen in the streets, and where everyone looked so clean. They looked too clean. They looked almost indecent when I thought of the soldiers in Italy. There were signs up, which seemed somehow out of key, reminding you that you must be proud of your uniform, that you mustn't shoot craps, and that, though you may be a tough guy where you came from, "we bathe and shave around here." There were signs everywhere, freshly painted in big plain unfriendly letters, threatening disciplinary action for this and disciplinary action for that. We hadn't had

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these signs overseas. It was strange, stiff, uncomfortable, and rookie to meet them here.

The barracks, mess halls, reading rooms, and bars were crowded with new boys going out to new battles, all eager and innocent, worried and confused. They seemed out of key, too, like the signs. Or perhaps we were out of key. It was strangers meeting, and there was just the least little feeling of hostility. The fresh young major in his so clean uniform, outward bound, didn't quite live in the same block with these thinner and tireder men, homeward bound, wearing their double lines of decorations and campaign ribbons.

We had a drink in the bar, bourbon, the first in many, many months, and with the drink there was a reunion. A very young boy, swinging his leg stiffly, because he had caught an explosive bullet in the knee over Burma, hurried up to Colonel Necrason and said, "How are you, Colonel Nick?"

He was on his way home, too, a southern Californian by adoption, Lieutenant Robert Woodard. He would be calling on his wife soon, asking for an introduction to his son.

"Do you remember," said Buzz Barton, "how you got the news you were a father when you were just coming out of the anesthetic in the hospital?"

"Yeah," he said, "and I thought the nurse was just kidding me to make me feel better."

And then a newspaperman with whom I made a factory tour two years ago joined us: Roy Porter, on his way to the China-Burma-India theater to organize an NBC bureau.

He told me his plans and, strangely enough, before I'd even gotten home he had me feeling restless and half wanting to see India again. You get so you're afraid you're missing things, which is stupid. And also all those signs and those very clean people were a little upsetting. What makes people so clean? They look terrible.

The next lap was to Trinidad. We hardly ever talked on these flights because the old ship roared and vibrated so badly that conversation had to be done at a shout. She'd gotten the vibration in a crackup which strained her whole frame and was one of the reasons she flew so peculiarly.

But on the way to Trinidad Colonel Bailey and I got so bored we decided to have a conversation even at a shout. And he told me a funny story that ought to be recorded, about how he first became a father. It's the classic of the suffering father.

"We were stationed in Puerto Rico," he said, "and the baby came

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early. There was no time to get my wife to the nearest American hospital, which was at the other end of the island, so I took her to a Spanish doctor. He operated in his pajamas and after half an hour called me over.

" 'Which do you want to save,' he asked me, 'the wife or the baby?' "

Now that's a hell of a question, you must admit, to ask a new father.

"What?" gurgled Bailey.

"Which?" demanded the doctor.

"Save my wife," said Bailey faintly.

He sat down, a beaten, broken man. The doctor labored on and on and finally he came out of the operating room, drying his hands, and said:

"Well, it is over."

"Which did you save?" asked Bailey.

"What is that you say?" demanded the doctor.

"Did you save my wife or my baby?"

"Oh, they are both quite all right," said the doctor casually, as if there had never been any talk about one or the other dying. "There is only one thing. The baby is rather small and must be put in an incubator immediately or he will die."

Bailey fainted slightly and mentioned he didn't happen to have an incubator in his pocket at the moment.

"There is an incubator in the American hospital at the other end of the island," said the doctor. "Perhaps you can borrow it."

Bailey got on the telephone and called the hospital, which refused to part with the incubator, but offered to take the baby, if it could be brought there.

"The child is too weak to go by car," said the doctor. "If he should become cold he will die. He weighs only four and one half pounds."

Colonel Bailey telephoned to charter a plane, but no plane could be had. So he swaddled the baby in blankets, drove out to the airport, found a pilot friend, and the two of them stole a bomber.

"It would probably have been all right about the bomber," said Bailey, "if it hadn't been scheduled to go out on maneuvers that day. We got the baby to the hospital all right, but when we returned to the base we were threatened. My friend got madder than I did and said if the Army wouldn't allow a bomber to be used to save a baby's life he would get out of the Army."

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The pilot friend didn't explain to Colonel Bailey how he planned to get out of the Army, but his indignation had effect.

The problems of the baby had only begun, however. The mother was too sick to be moved and the baby was too weak to get along on prepared milk. It had to have mother's milk.

So poor Father Bailey, who by this time was beginning to wonder if parenthood were worth it, had to arrange each day for a bottle of the mother's milk to be flown from mother to baby.

And this daily flight naturally came to be known as the milk run, the original genuine airplane milk run.

But the really remarkable thing about the story is that Father Bailey a year later consented to become a father again.

Only this second time he arranged it so that the baby would be born in Boise while old Father Bailey was up in Chungking.

And now Father Bailey was about to see No. 2 for the first time when he arrived home in Burley, Idaho, the following week.

On the final afternoon of flying from Trinidad to Miami our navigator, Lieutenant Glick, made his only mistake since we left Algiers.

He wound himself up in a lot of figures, went round and round with them, and came up with a statement that we were flying over Puerto Rico when we were flying over Haiti.

"Then we're off course," said Necrason severely. (We were in no mood to have Hermie put us off course on this last lap.) "How come, Hermie?"

"Strong cross wind," said Hermie, which is the only thing for a navigator to say when he's off course. "Wait a minute. I'll figure it out again."

He fouled himself up in a lot more figures and then came up with a new decision.

"We're on course," he said. "That was Haiti."

"That's better," said the colonel.

For the record I should put it straight that Hermie made one other mistake. He brought us down at the wrong airport in Trinidad and we had to take off again, but perhaps that was everybody's fault for not paying better attention.

Besides, if Hermie was slipping a little, we couldn't blame him much. He lived a solitary life on an unbalanced diet. He didn't live with the rest of us in the flight deck but sat alone in the nose all day at his table, with his nautical instruments, doing arithmetic. When mealtimes came around we always forgot to feed Hermie until the

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very last. And it seemed there was never anything left but cheese sandwiches. Hermie several times commented that we should ask for lunches which didn't consist of 100 per cent cheese sandwiches. Nobody had the heart to tell Hermie the truth—that we ate the jam sandwiches ourselves.

Well, so we reached Miami and put down on American soil and everyone failed to say anything to suit the occasion. It seemed more of an anticlimax, as nobody was home except Captain Buzz Barton, whose wife had taken a house there.

"You must come out and have a drink with us," he had said many times on the trip across. "We have a nice little house."

As he came out of the telephone booth after talking to his wife we offered to go immediately and have a drink at his nice little house.

"She's sold it," he said, looking a little glassy-eyed. "We don't live here any more. We're taking the train tomorrow."

Our first impression of America was that everyone had a new car excepting us, plus plenty of black-market gasoline. They seemed to be enjoying some kind of bootleg gasoline scandal in Miami at the moment. There were many scandals there, we understood, about people living too high and not realizing there was a war on.

We were prepared to be shocked and disgusted by everything, but at the same time, if there was any high living going on, we wanted to be sure to get in on it, as we had only had low living for many months.

Moreover, we were anxious to find some places to spend our money, as we hadn't been able to spend money for so long we were badly out of practice.

Our first idea for spending was to get into the best and most expensive hotel, with orchestras on three or four floors, and just circulate for forty-eight hours. But we found out that we couldn't get in the best hotels because the racing crowd had them tied up. They put us in army quarters again, where we had to be up by eight o'clock or miss our breakfast. This sapped our confidence in the country and we felt that the high living was a little one-sided.

Our astonishment at this one-sided high living was quadrupled when inquiries were made about rail transportation north in case the old ship, which was feeling a little raunchy again, was unable to take off.

"It will be rough," said the transportation officer. "The trains are crowded. The racing crowd is just leaving."

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We had quite an indignation meeting over this and began to be concerned for the safety of the country. To restore our morale we went out looking for some high living and found a restaurant called the Seven Seas, where it is permissible to get slightly awash if you choose. We decided it would be contrary to the war effort to consume alcohol, however, as we had heard whisky and rum can be made into automobile tires.

"Bring on plenty of soft drinks and milk," we said, settling down to it.

We were shocked and disgusted to see that many people, however, were gulping down potential tires, and to restore our morale we mixed a very little rum with our colas from time to time. This seemed to restore our confidence in the country, at least temporarily.

Without looking too hard we found several places where we could spend our money, especially a place called Jimmie's where everyone was separated from $2.75 to get a steak. They offered us alcohol here, too, but we declined, except for not enough French brandy to make even a small section of bicycle tire which we did consent to take because it was one of the best opportunities we had yet run across for spending our money. It cost $1.25 a thimbleful.

We spent enough money at Jimmie's to make us completely satisfied that there will be no difficulty in all of us getting quickly back to financial normal.

We were able then to get our first sweet sleep in months.

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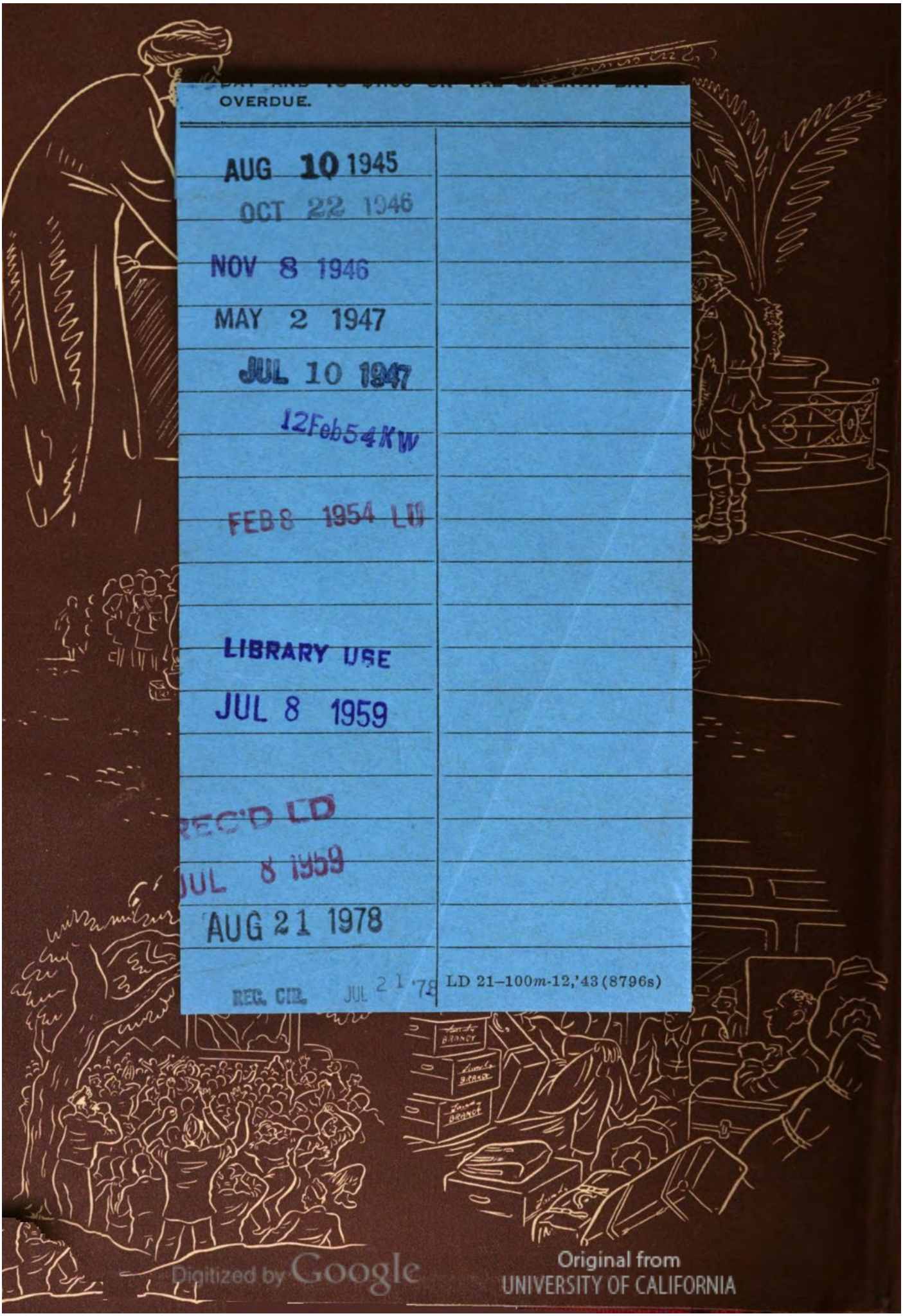

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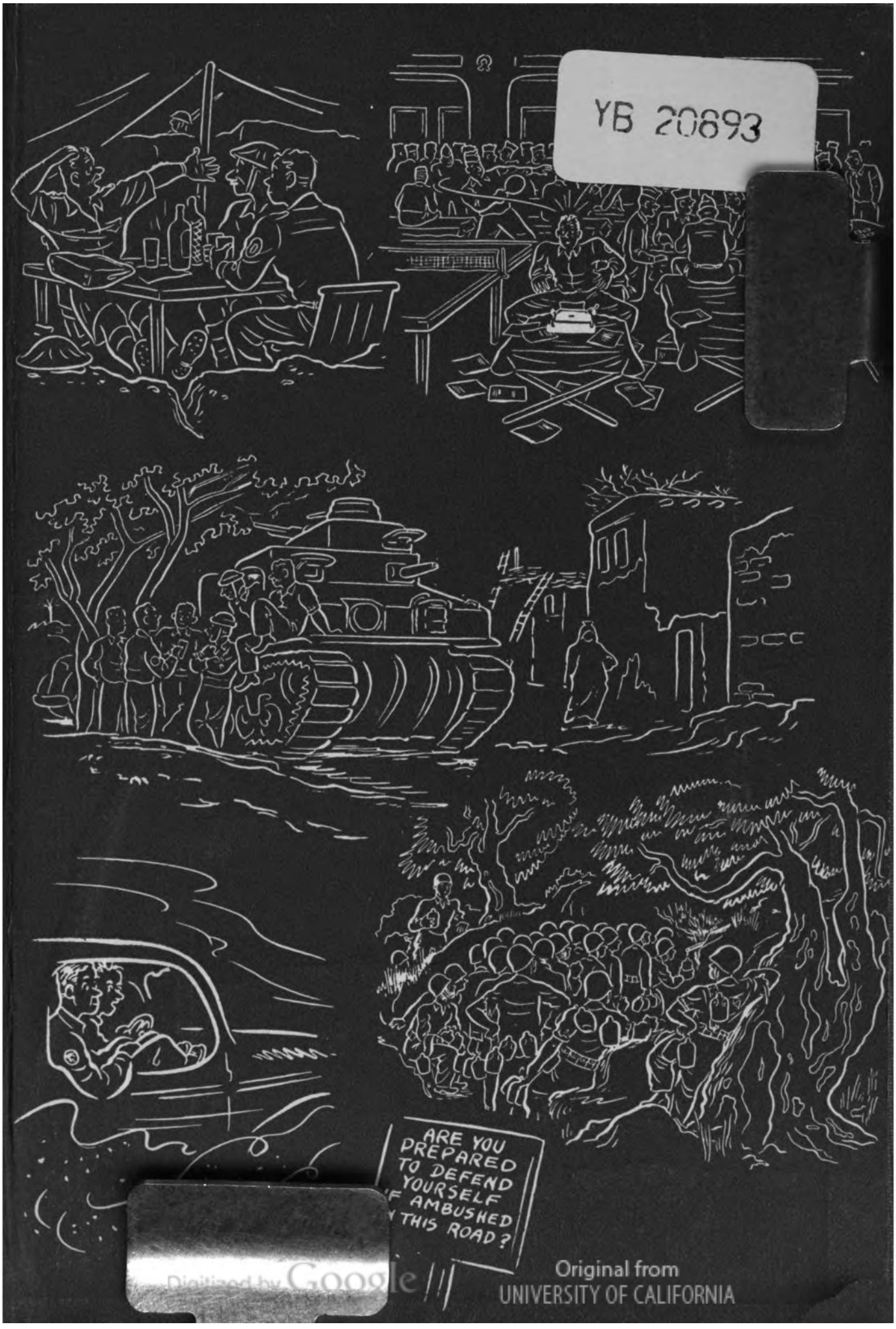

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